Special Issue: 7th Anniversary

SPIN

COLLEGE MUSIC REPORT: B.A.D. II, Ned's Atomic Dustbin, Moose

7 GREATEST BANDS OF ALL TIME
Sex Pistols —and who else?

TRIBAL CUSTOMS: The Deadheads by Douglas Coupland

NIRVANA: How They Made It

Plus: Live, L7, Curve, Lush, Bikini Kill

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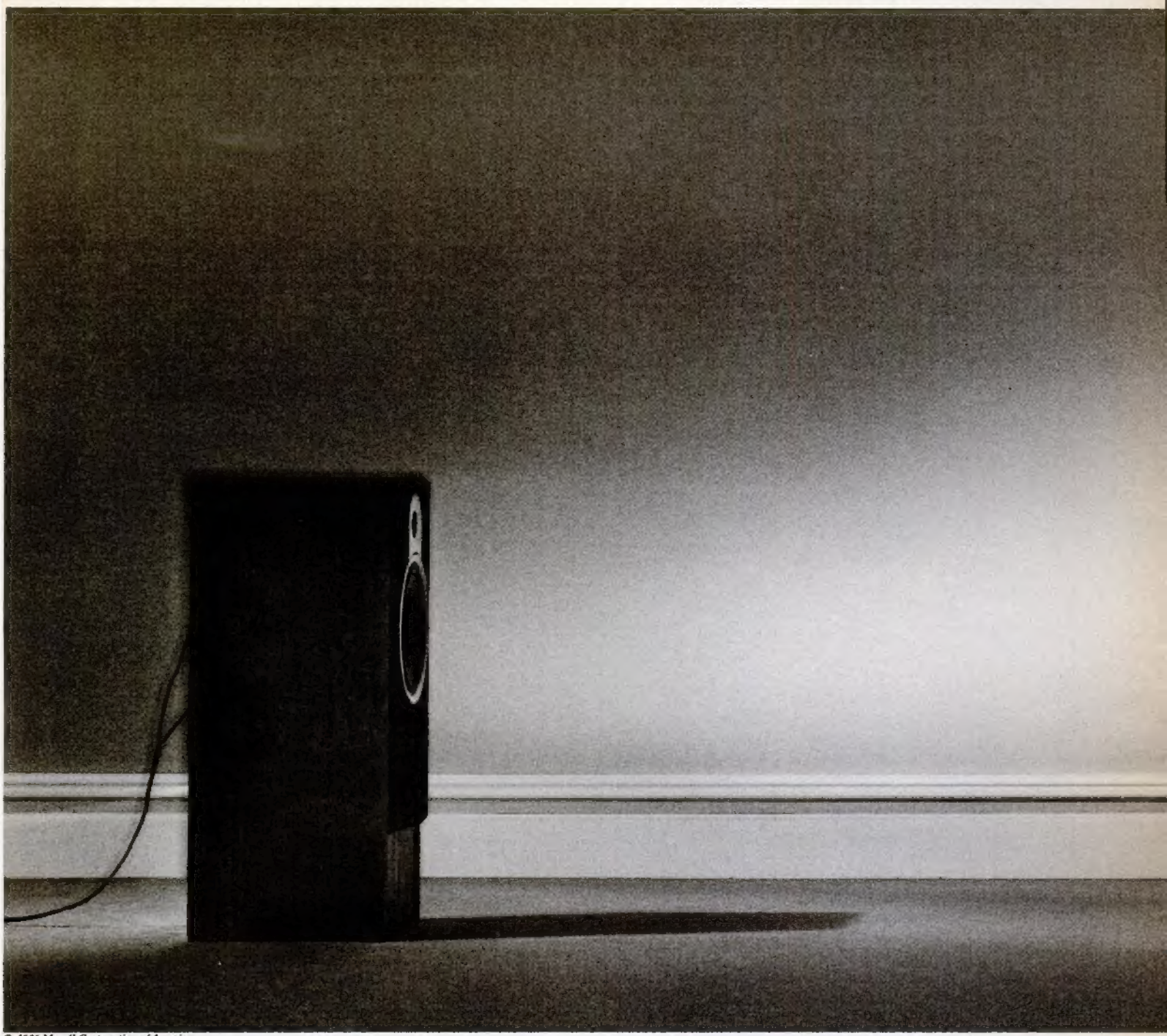

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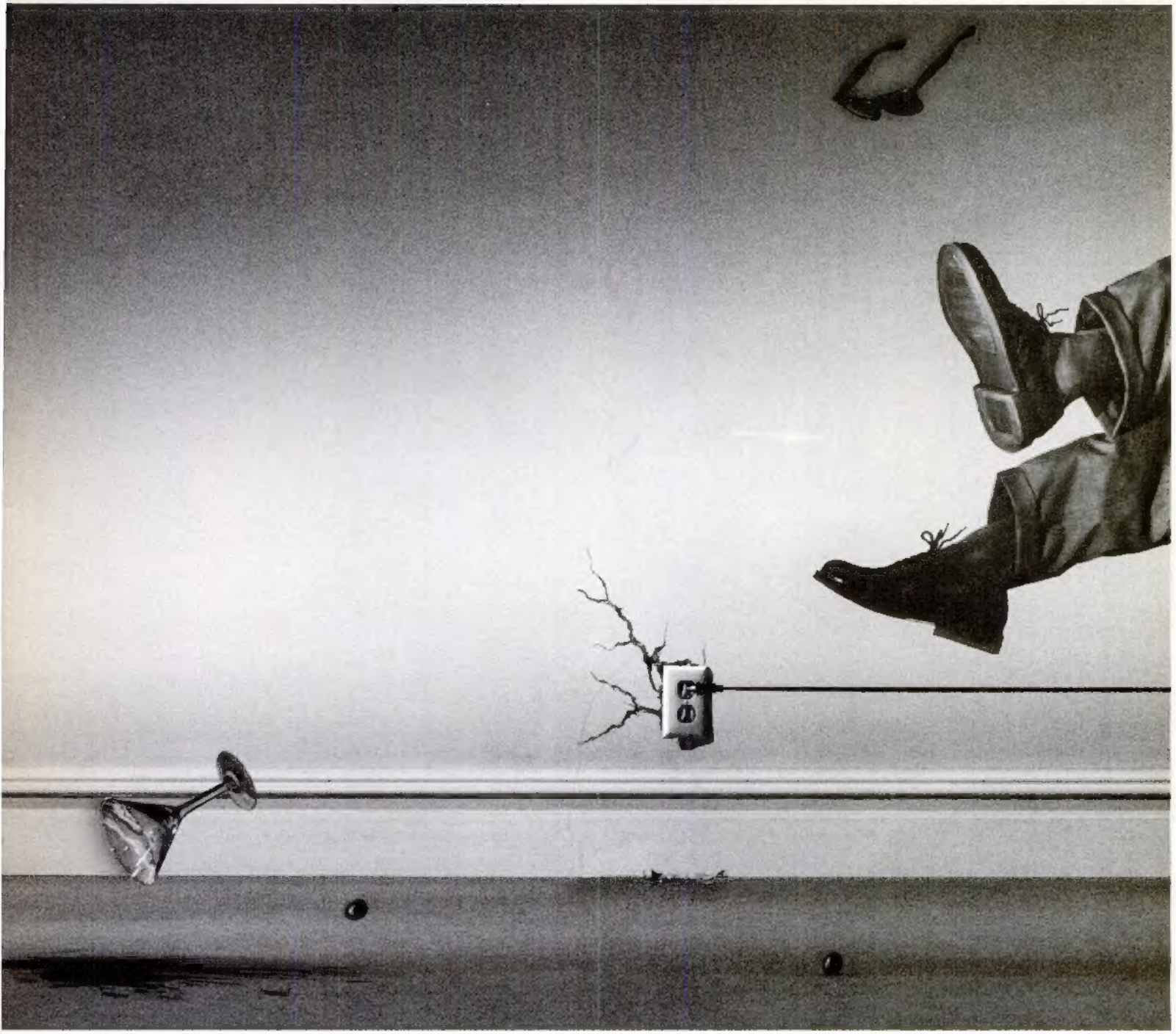

choice in the Type II high bias category, placing it, in the words of their reviewer, "Head, shoulders and torso above the rest."

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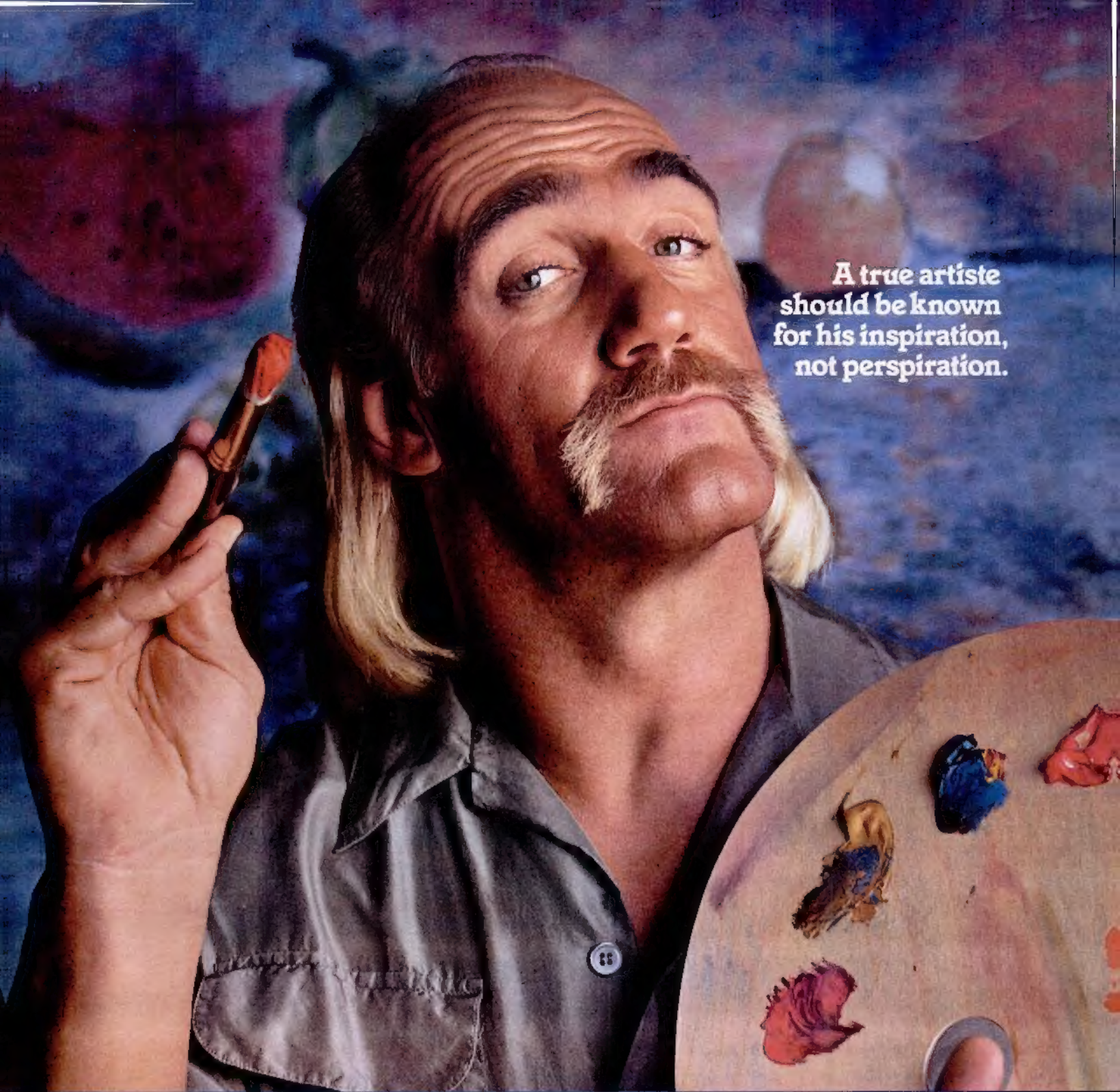

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IN

SPECIAL 7TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE!

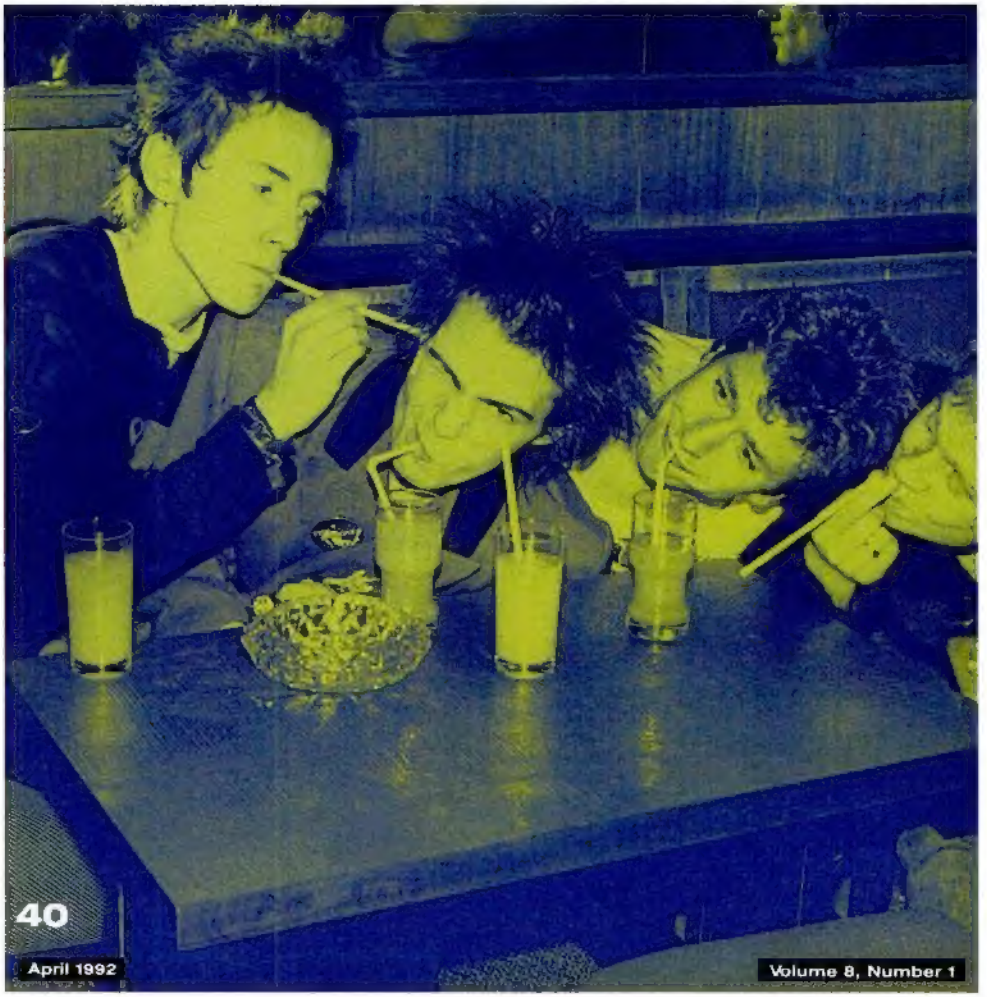
Still crazy after all these years, SPIN celebrates the first year of the rest of its life.

The Seven Greatest Bands of All Time, page 38

The Sex Pistols, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Public Enemy, the Ramones, Jimi Hendrix, and Led Zeppelin—that's who the seven are. And now read why.

60

JESSE FROHMAN



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Cover and above photograph by Bob Gruen

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SPIN is published by Camouflage Associates
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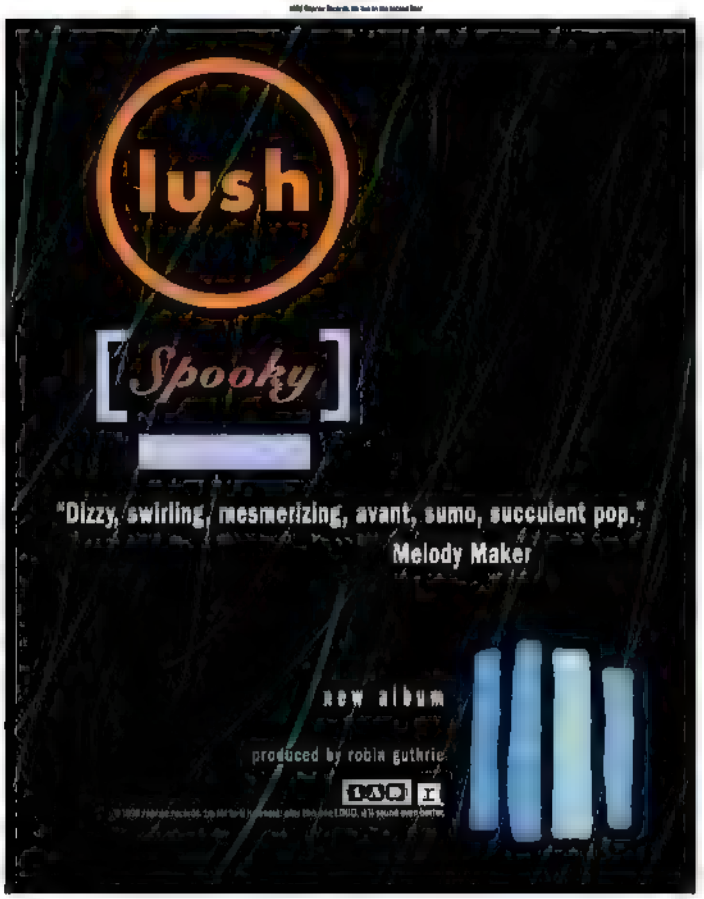
DARREN KEITH

Rolling Stone called **Luka Bloom** *".. the inheritor of a particularly Irish mix of mysticism and moonshine, a carousing spirituality that marks musicians as distinct as Van Morrison and U2." He's fun, passionate, a great songwriter... and rather handsome, when you see his face.*
Luka's new album, The Acoustic Motorbike, features 12 remarkable tracks, including "I Need Love."



TALE SPINNERS

It's SPIN's seventh birthday! More than 100 musical artists, record executives, celebrities, critics, and friends gave us their picks for the seven best bands ever. The result: a 12-page monument to the "Seven Greatest Bands of All Time" (*page 38*). SPIN's own pick was the Sex Pistols; punk historian **Jon Savage** explains why (*page 40*). Savage, author of *England's Dreaming* (St. Martin's), attended the infamous Pistols boat show in June 1977, where the band played "Anarchy in the U.K." in front of the Houses of Parliament. • **Glenn O'Brien**, who as one of SPIN's founding editors witnessed its birth in 1985, records his memories of that fateful year (*page 36*). • Following up SPIN's recent report on the new alt-rock British invasion, **Simon Reynolds** has dubbed the new girl groups coming out of the U.K. "ethereal girls" (*page 56*). Reynolds is author of *Blissed Out: The Raptures of Rock* (Serpent's Tale). • On these shores, Los Angeles writer **Alison Powell** profiles far-from-ethereal—perhaps, *hyperreal*—girl rockers L7 (*page 65*): "People thought the girls would shred me, but the truth is we've decided to have each other's children." Powell is currently at work on a novel called *Goatee*. • Another West Coast writer, **David Williams**, makes his SPIN debut this month writing on D.C. hip hop group Basehead (*page 20*). • Photographer **Danny Clinch** shot both Basehead and Live (*page 67*) for this issue. • **Doug Coupland**, author of the runaway best-selling cult novel *Generation X* (St. Martin's), spent a week in California immersed in Deadhead culture to produce "Polaroids From the Dead" (*page 70*). Coupland does not believe in contributors pages "because they make the author sound chatty and comfortable," he says. Coupland lives in Vancouver, Canada. • Photographer **Loren Haynes** walked among the living Deadheads for one of his most interesting assignments yet. "I felt I had lost 20 years of my life somewhere," he reports. "I wondered if anybody really knew it was the end of 1991."

Alison Powell

STEPHAN HITCHCOCK
Danny Clinch

Doug Coupland

Loren Haynes

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TOP SPIN

Gorbachev's meeting with the Scorpions symbolically capped the end of Communism in Eastern Europe. *From left,* Francis Buchholz, Rudolf Schenker, Klaus Meine, Herman Rarebell, and Matthias Jabs.

About six years ago, when my friend David Krebs returned from Hungary where the Scorpions had played, the first time a Western rock band had performed in that country, he told me that when he looked out from the stage at the 70,000 young people gathered, he wished he had thought of bringing a hundred cassettes of the Scorpions' music to throw into the crowd. "Each one of them would've made ten copies and given them away, and each one of those guys would've made ten more copies and so on, and pretty soon there'd be a hundred thousand rock'n'roll cassettes in distribution. The kids would hear what was going on and tear down Communism," he said. "Go back," I said.

We both thought about this sadly missed opportunity, and his concept of rock'n'roll's message as a virus of liberation. It was a whimsical scenario, because neither one of us thought we'd see the end of Soviet Communism in our lifetimes.

The first half of President Bush's State of the Union address was about the wrong union. That's been the problem and failure of his presidency. Obnoxiously and, to any thinking American, insultingly, Bush brazenly dressed himself up as a cross between Rambo and Jimmy Swaggart, and claimed credit for winning the cold war, kicking some heathen Arab butt, with God at his back, presumably holding the ammo. Forget for the moment (as Bush has for the past three years) the dire, nightmarish social conditions at home, and consider what it really is Bush is taking credit for, and what it says about our country that he offers it as his most appealing résumé item: a horrific, unnecessary war that stained another generation of ours and annihilated another generation in the Middle East, all basically for no change in terms of human conditions, except that there are now fewer humans to suffer them. And the strangulation of the Soviet Union by economically outlasting them (although maybe not, at least not by much to spare).

I'm not arguing against the need to keep the world's oil trade, and therefore global commerce, free and working. I'm just saying that the circumstances of the Gulf conflict were suspect and the methodology of its resolution was cynical and barbaric, calculated to distract from America's disintegration under ten years of Republican rule, and satisfy a number of other insidious agendas, including the spreading of what Bush called his "New World Order," a phrase used, by the way, by Adolf Hitler.

And I'm not saying that the end of Communism isn't a good thing. I'm sure it is, although from the people who previously lived under it you might get some arguments. Many of them lived better before, and I don't mean the corrupt bureaucracy that manipulated the system in its favor. Millions of average working people actually subsisted better with Communism in place. We in the free West regard the current Eastern European and Russian nightmare as an inevitably difficult transition period—they regard it as a nightmare. They live it, we don't, but still, from our unaffected vantage point, I'm sure we're correct in our assertion that in the end the displacement of Communism is a much better thing for those who displaced it and are suffering its passing. It's just that I think that while we are celebrating the ideological triumph of freedom over oppression, we should be a little more soberly and respectfully sensitive to hundreds of millions of fellow human beings literally struggling for their lives. We may be a strong country and we may love to puff our chests up sanctimoniously about our closeness to God, but we are not by and large a compassionate people, or if we are I've missed it. Bush drew a standing ovation for declaring in that thin, high-pitched voice of his, "By the grace of God, America won the cold war"—he was also saying, and being applauded for: Too bad for those poor bastards who lost it.

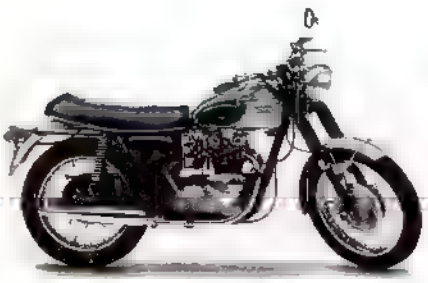
Last year, after we won the Gulf War, and the euphoria of that passed, the plight of the Kurds and the war's other victims evaporated from our TV screens and consciousness like a rain puddle on a hot day. It just wasn't as good copy as the real life Nintendo game. It never is.

The implication in Bush's speech was, of course, the end of the threat of nuclear war as a result of the cold war's frostbite cracking the Soviet Union into a multitude of pieces. This fantasy ignores reality. Russia's nuclear weaponry, and its scientists and their expertise, are now less controllable than they were. The desperate conditions being experienced by the many fledgling republics are far more serious and potentially volatile than when the Soviet Union was whole. Yeltsin looks a lot less solid than Gorbachev. Like a cancer that had been benignly ▶

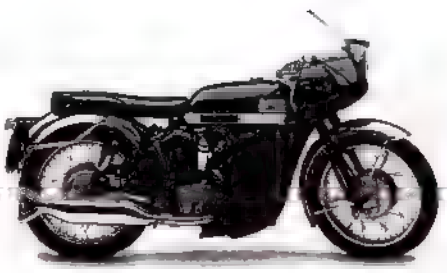
PEACHTREE KEY LARGO BLUEBERRY TRIPLE SEC PEPPERMINT CINNAMON

OLD TAVERN STRAWBERRY APPLE BARREL MELON LIQUEUR CRANTASIA PEACHTREE

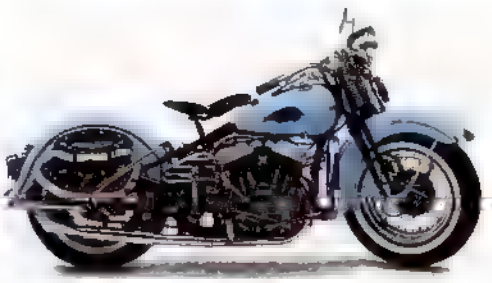
WILDERBERRY PEPPERMINT 100 TRIPLE SEC SPEARMINT BLUEBERRY HOT DAMN! BUTTERSHOTS



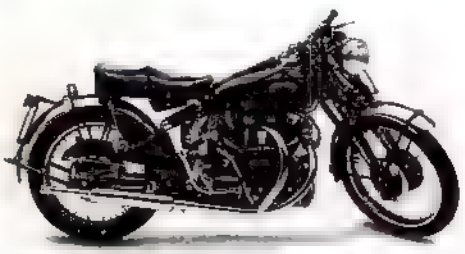
1969 Triumph Daytona



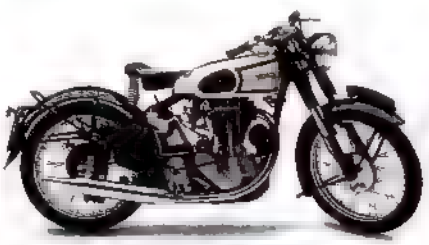
1966 Velocette Venom



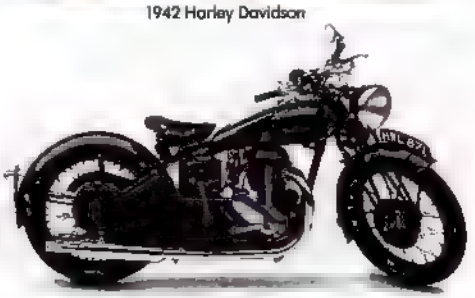
1942 Harley Davidson



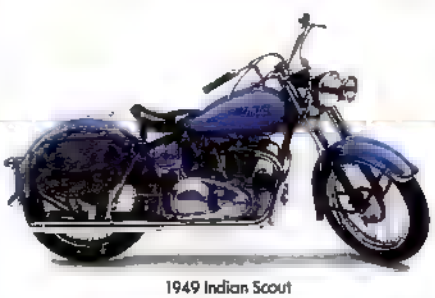
1953 Vincent Black Shadow, Series C



1951 Norton International

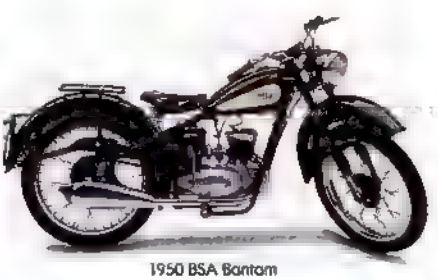


1939 Rudge

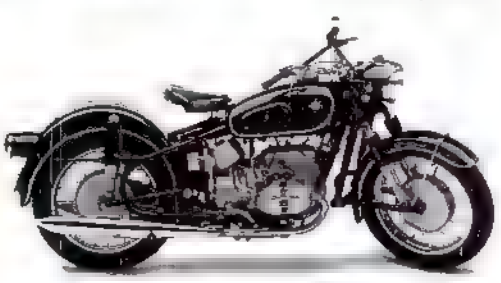


1949 Indian Scout

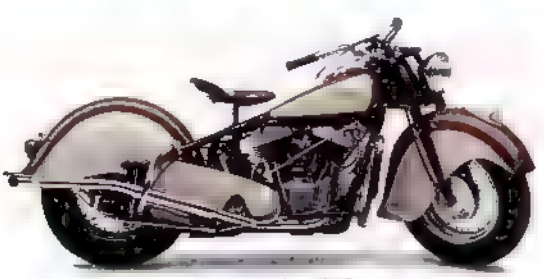
1942 Harley 45 Flathead



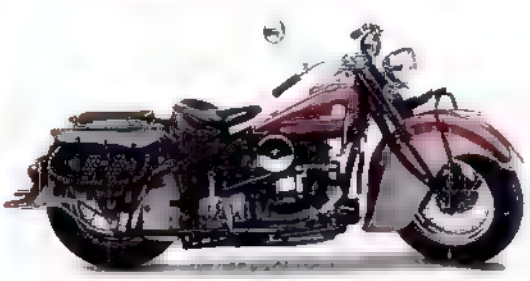
1950 BSA Bantam



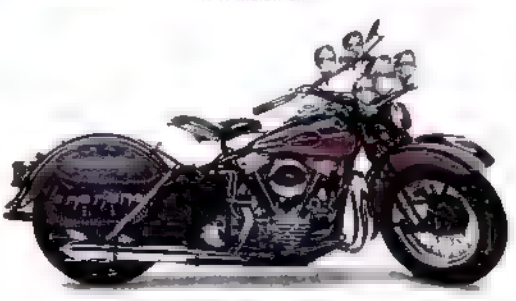
1965 BMW R69S



1947 Indian Chief



1942 Indian 4 Cylinder



1946 Harley Knucklehead

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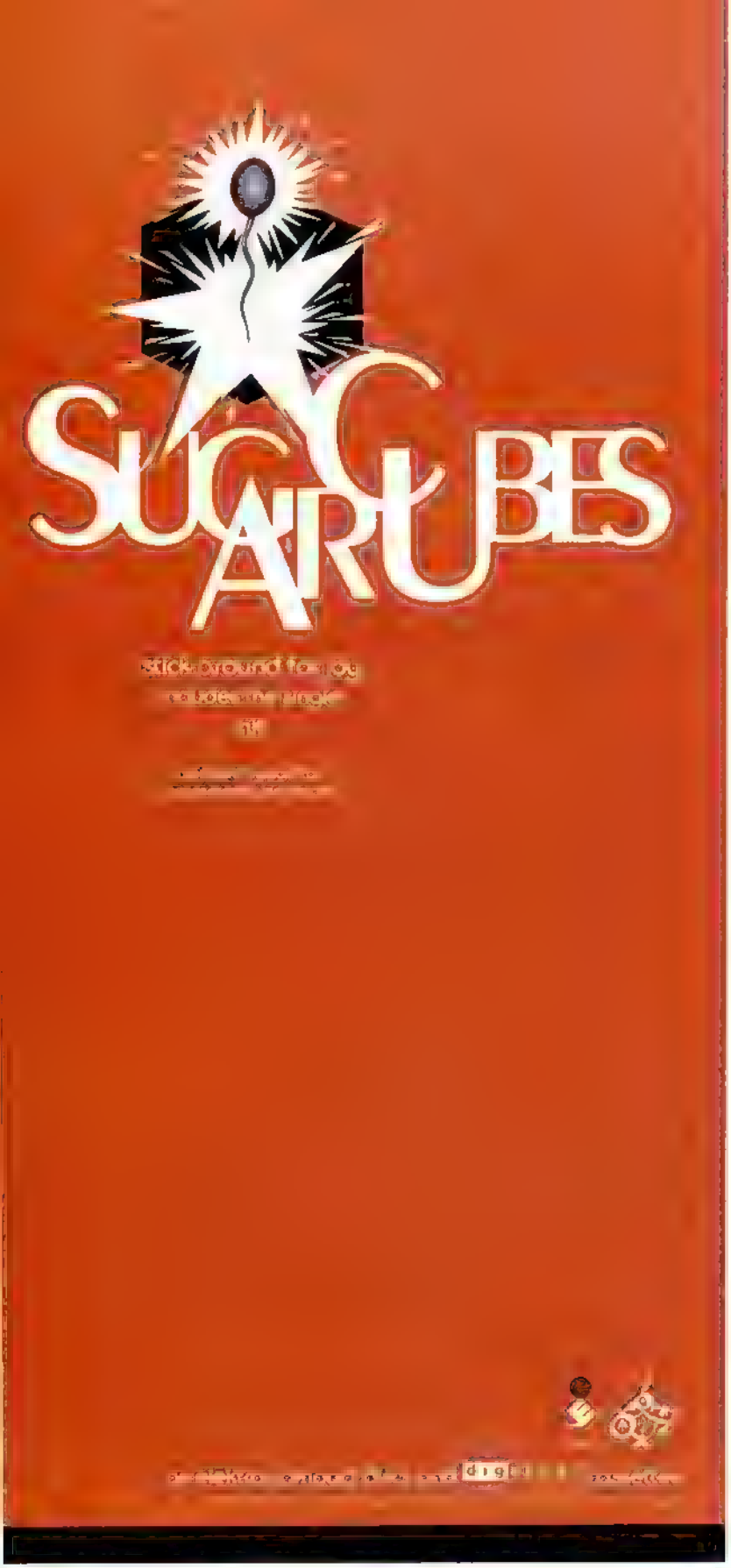
contained but has now divided and spread horribly, the threat of nuclear arms being sold covertly to countries like Iraq or Libya is real. I used not to be worried about nuclear war. Now I am.

Foreign policy in today's interconnected world is important and realistic. But Bush's foreign policy is all superficial gloss and no real substance, late-night TV advertising flash for a shoddy product: It'll work, but it breaks easy. What he's trumpeting as the culmination of three years' presidency is that the mightiest (and costliest) military power on earth beat the shit out of a Club Med called Panama, so that Bush could arrest a former drug dealing partner; that he fought a mini-Armageddon that left the adversary in place, only now with a real score to settle; and that he mistakes the precarious instability of Russia to be a mere detail yet to be worked out in the otherwise glorious vindication of American virtue.

Bush's address was his first '92 campaign speech, and a good opportunity to scout what his campaign will be. His Rambo mythology is placebo as medicine for those who don't want to admit or deal with America's dire problems and real decline, not just as a world power but as a healthy society, and his rhetoric about domestic issues is just riddled with pure deceit. His bromides for the American economy are short-lived; the consequences of his neglect of it will be long lasting, whether or not the recession passes and reappears like threatening storm clouds. He decries drug-related crime and yet his and Reagan's policies and agencies have been partners with it, and have created and polarized the inner city conditions in which it festers. He appoints Magic Johnson to an AIDS commission and gets his wife to hold the occasional AIDS baby, but other than that wouldn't touch the issue with a rubber glove on, sensing that the sort of people who revel in us beating up third world countries don't want us wasting taxpayers' money on diseases they think homosexuals brought on themselves. And there are no jobs. For which Bush's best idea has been to cut luxury taxes to stimulate the yacht-building industry. Seriously.

Seven years ago, in March '85, when this magazine premiered, Gorbachev became head of the Soviet Union. A few months ago, days before he resigned, as the Union dissolved into the new commonwealth, he met for an hour with the Scorpions. He and Raisa had heard the Russian language version of the West German rock group's hit "Winds of Change," about the sweeping aside of Communism and the rebirth of freedom in Eastern Europe, and Gorbachev wanted to meet the musicians who had turned his instigated reforms into an anthem. He knew his end was near and maybe he wanted the photo op as a last-ditch attempt to stimulate the West into recognizing that he was the one who had transformed the world, and who should be supported to stay at the helm of the new Russia. But I think the real reason was more romantic and even subtly dignified than that: I think he wanted the photo op as a farewell postcard to the world, reminding us he had bridged the gap between East and West—he, not Bush or Reagan with their souvenir chunks of the Berlin wall, had thawed the cold war.

I was originally invited by the Scorpions' record company to attend that meeting, and just as I was about to leave, the Soviet government faxed through a notice that they were banning American journalists from the closed session. So I didn't get the chance to witness the irony of the Scorpions themselves punctuating the end of Eastern European Communism, and to tell them the story about David Krebs and the cassettes.

—Bob Guccione, Jr.

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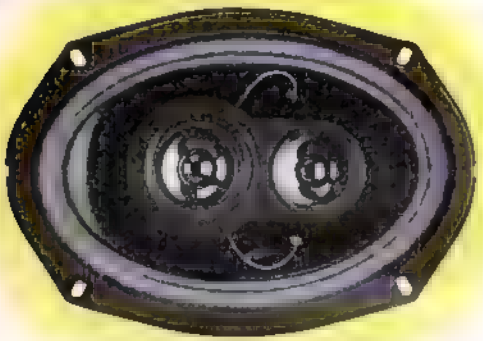

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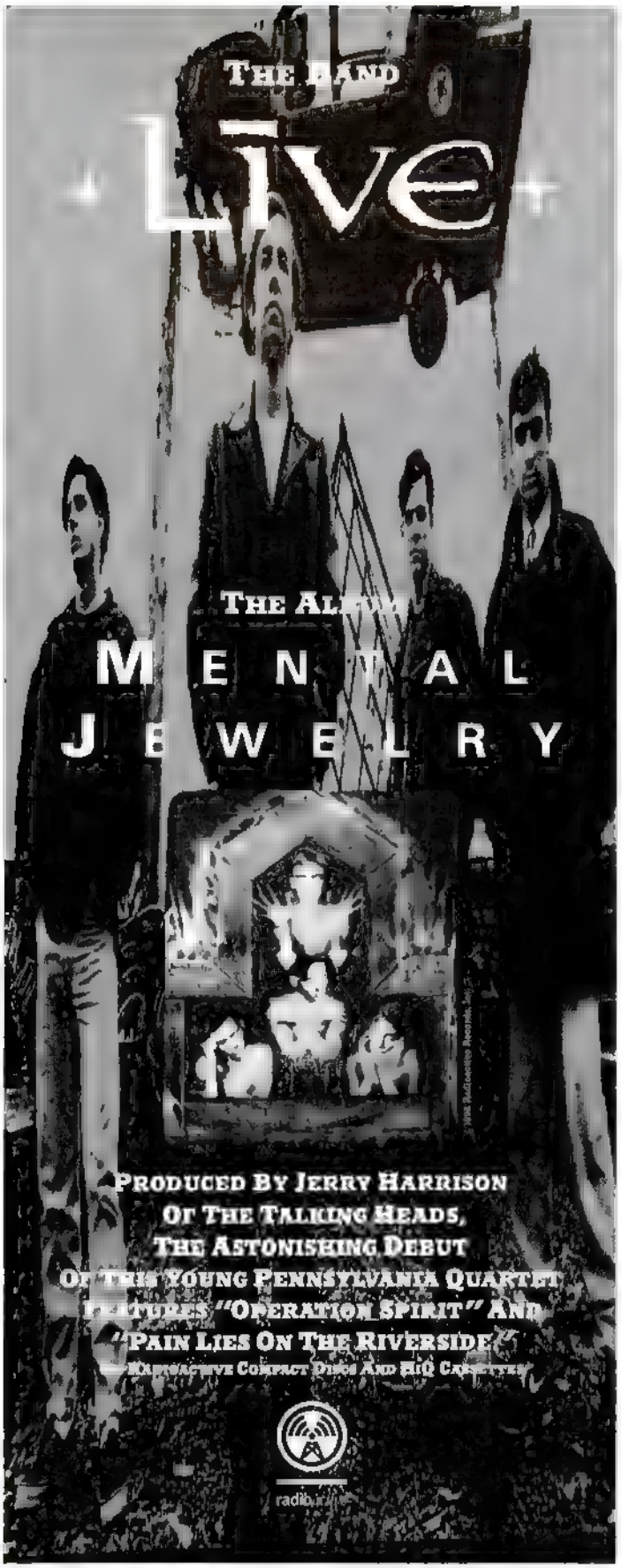

POINT BLANK LETTERS

Stairway to Heaven

It's kind of funny that the Nirvana on the cover of SPIN [January '92] is the same band that two years ago I was not allowed to play on Arizona college radio because the program director said it wasn't commercial enough.

P.J. MARK
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

When I wore my FUDGE PACKIN, CRACK SMOKIN, SATAN WORSHIPPIN MOTHERFUCKER Nirvana T-shirt to school, I was surprised and scared when the very same apathetic losers that "Smells Like Teen Spirit" is about began commenting to me about what an awesome song it is. I mean, don't these people listen? The last thing I wanted to think was that Nirvana was selling out.

JENNIFER SCHWARZ
BELLEVILLE, MICHIGAN

Kissing the Blarney Stone

If I were able to share a beer and a conversation with anyone on this planet, it would be Oliver Stone [Antihero, January '92]. Thank you, Mr. Stone. In a world full of blind public desperation and corporate deviousness, your works have helped provide my young college soul with a critical mind. Hey, Mr. Stone, whaddaya think about Leonard Peltier?

ERICH FLESHMAN
LIVERMORE, CALIFORNIA

Down With MTV

It was very humble of Tom Freston ["Mr. MTV," January '92] to take credit for certain bands' success by stating "MTV's been really helpful to a lot of new bands: Jane's Addiction, Black Crowes, R.E.M., to name a few, as well as all the rap artists." MTV may be somewhat responsible for the Black Crowes' commercial popularity. However, putting *one* of Jane's Addiction's videos from its third release into heavy rotation, as the band is about to break up, does not sound like help—only like jumping on the bandwagon late!

As for R.E.M., MTV had nothing to do with its success. Go listen to a college radio station for a clue as to where R.E.M. gained its audience! And I guess someone needs to tell "*all* the rap artists" who they need to thank! Of course, Tom has all my thanks.

STEPHEN E. KLOESEL
IRVING, TEXAS

Slippin' Into the Future

Thanks for profiling the Blake Babies in your New Music Preview [January '92]. Girls *are*, as a general rule, smarter and cooler than boys. But don't be offended—boys do follow at a close second place. Keep finding the cool bands!

JENNIFER LADNER
ARLINGTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Regarding your New Music Preview: I, for one, hope that you are very wrong. Why don't these "new" bands go back to art school and try to be something different from R.E.M. on LSD? If this is the sorry state of music in the future, I don't want anything to do with it. If you are right and I am wrong, I will just kill myself so that I do not have to put up with this!

PHILIP E. MIKOLEIT
BETHEL PARK, PENNSYLVANIA

Me So Misquoted

Like a lot of people, Jack Thompson thinks I testified that "Luther Campbell ranks with Joyce, Chaucer, and Shakespeare" [Spins, January '92]. I didn't. When I was asked, under direct examination, if one could find lewd language in Western literature, I cited a few obvious examples. But I never compared Campbell to these illustrious names, and when the prosecutor asked if I meant to, I explicitly rejected this absurdity. Enough said?

HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR.
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

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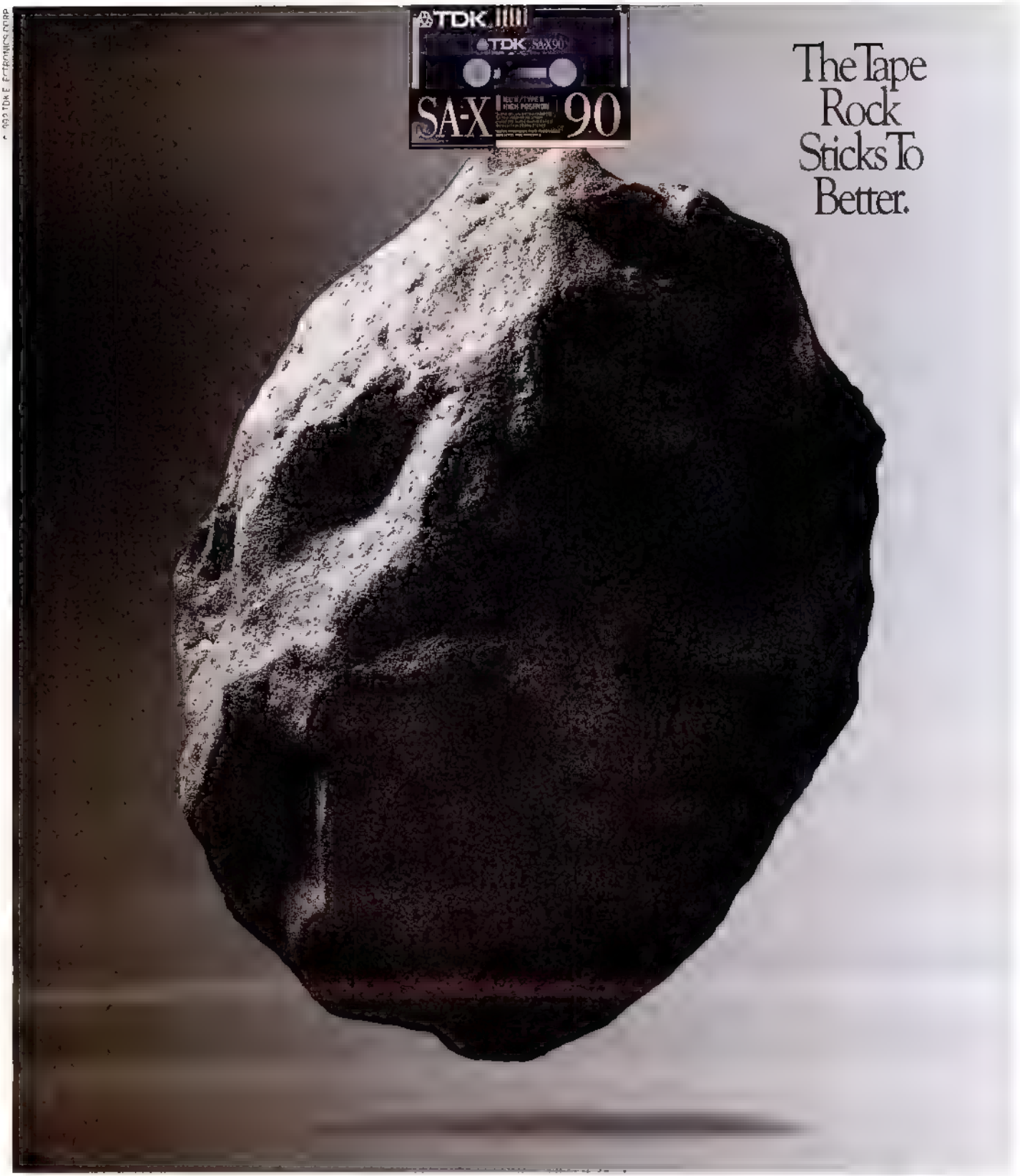

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TDK
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JOHN MORAN
"The Manson Family"
(Point Music 432-967-2/4)

Philip Glass's new label Point Music releases "The Manson Family," an opera by New York composer John Moran which illustrates the media's exploitation of Charles Manson's macabre reign of terror and its impact on American culture. Featuring Iggy Pop and Terry Roche.

MIRACLE LEGION
"Drenched"
(Morgan Creek 2958-20006-2/4)

Miracle Legion's "Drenched" is an album featuring songs about love, loss of love, immortality, racism, friendship and absence. "Snacks and Candy" addresses the racially motivated murder of a young black man in Bensonhurst. "Ridin' Lover" features ex-Faces member Ian MacLagen. Get "Drenched."

JAMES
"Seven"
(Fontana/Mercury 314-510-832-2/4)

Seven years after their first record, James releases "Seven." "Seven" follows the eponymous "James" album which featured the chart-topping hit "Sit Down." Check out "Born of Frustration" and "Seven" from the new album and don't miss James on tour in the U.S. this year.

E
"A Man Called E"
(Polydor/PLG 314-511-570-2/4)

As unusual as it may sound, E is a man whose music is as simple as his name. Pop melodies disguised under somewhat poetic lyrics flow quietly through this amazing debut effort "A Man Called E."

WONDER STUFF
"Never Loved Elvis"
(Polydor/PLG 847 252-2/4)

Welcome to the world of Wonder Stuff – "Welcome to The Cheap Seats!" – the current single from the smash album "Never Loved Elvis." Also included is a rare Stuffies gem: a rousing cover of the Jam classic "That's Entertainment."

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Washington, D.C.'s Basehead parks its laid-back hip hop in the

base-ic instinct

garage. Just hope catatonic singer Michael Ivey remembers to switch off the engine.

More laid-back than a macrobiotic checkout clerk at a health food store, Basehead's first LP, *Play With Toys*, emits a mid-tech garage band groove in a low-testosterone style. When something this fresh comes out, it sends critics scrambling for a high concept—in this case Galaxie 500 meets De La Soul. How, then, does singer-guitarist-writer-producer Michael Ivey describe da groove?

"There are hip hop elements in there, but if a hard-core hip hop fan bought it, he might be disappointed. The guitar stuff I like is Hendrix, Zeppelin, and Prince. When I made it, I didn't say, 'I want to mix this with that,' I just wanted to come up with something I liked."

First out on tiny indie Emigre and soon to be rereleased by Imago, *Play With Toys* sounds like it was recorded with only a fistful of dollars and a 40-ounce, rendering sad the sonic grandeur of many high-budget blowhards. Ivey is as ego-free as you might expect from a man whose vocal style has been called catatonic:

"It's kinda weird the way the record was made. I didn't want it to be *that* laid-back. I did the whole thing myself, and it's still in the formative thing, and it was my first time in the studio, and stuff. The next record is going to be a little more aggressive, you know a little less . . ."

Catatonic?

"Yeah, I expected if anybody liked it, they would've given me some money to go back and redo it, 'cause I kinda, like, ran out of cash. But the guys at Emigre said that it was cool the way it is."

Slouching straight outta D.C., Basehead makes a mellow noise with live drums, acoustic guitar, bass, and DJ; its album bears patient listening, for the lyrics are funny, moist, and correct.

"We did the last song first, and since it had a kind of country flavor, we did the front one the same way. So it's a nice headpiece and tailpiece," explains Ivey. "It's weird—one record company asked for a copy of the record and when Emigre called to see if they liked it, they said it was too hillbilly!"

There's no dearth of neuronal activity on this disc, but as with early *Saturday Night Live*, you may have to be in the same skewed reality as the performers to catch the wave. An EZ-funk ode to buds, Buds, and lost gray matter, plays to the kinky broken-hearted piano of "Not Over You," raising Ivey's voice a notch off the floor into semitorpor. Here, a friend tries to console the whipped into positivity before a hilarious conceptual radio road trip rubs salt in the wound. Songs about fidelity ("Hair") and the brutality of life as seen on the evening news all swerve betwixt the dreamy and the hard. Humor, soul, and reality; there are no easy answers, just strategies.

"When somebody does something wrong, like doing or selling drugs, there are so many reasons and causes that there is no one solution. To try and make it into a song is kinda ridiculous so, you know, I don't try to preach."

Ivey, augmented by drummer Brian Hendrix, guitarist Keith Lofton, bassist Bill Conway, and a DJ, Paul "DJ Unique" Howard, will hit the road soon to spread the gospel: Throw away the crack pipe and become a Basehead.

DAVID WILLIAMS

Photograph by Danny Clinch

How low can you go? *From left:* Keith Lofton, Bill Conway, Michael Ivey, and Brian Hendrix.

Godflesh *Pure* (Relativity). Music to become obsessed with—that is if you want to deepen your relationship with your therapist. Godflesh's grindcore thang goes straight to the nervous system and wreaks havoc. The relentless drum machine knocks you down first, then the menacing guitars swallow you whole—by the time you get to the vocals you're finished. Not a bad way to go. (Spencer)

Rites of Spring *Rites of Spring* (Dischord). Ah, emocore: emotional, melodic, drivin' n' cryin', hardcore punk. Rites of Spring was king. The band's sheer intensity fueled D.C.'s Revolution Summer, and legend has it singer guitarist Guy Picciotto sang himself to tears when belting out these songs onstage. This CD reissue brings it all back, including both of the band's releases, and enough innocent anger to leave suburbia in flames. (Fuller)

The Family Stand *Moon in Scorpio* (Atco/EastWest). This black rock band returns to the scene with a disc of scorching, multilayered jams that somehow manages to be angry, happy-go-lucky, pop-slick, and rough-hewn all at the same time. The first side is the most engaging. Harmonies click, solos ignite, and "Plantation Radio" speaks volumes about airwave apartheid. (Poulson-Bryant)

HEAVY ROTATION

STAFF SELECTIONS

The Breeders *Safari* (4AD/Elektra). What if you took Kim Deal away from the Pixies, invited her twin sister, Kelley, to come along, gave Tanya Donelly from the Throwing Muses a call, and then asked a couple of other cool people nobody ever heard of to join you? Well, you'd have this EP's incarnation of the Breeders—wonderfully quirky girl-rock with a nice sharp bite. Includes a great version of the Who classic, "So Sad About Us." (Blackwell)

King Crimson *The Essential King Crimson: Frame by Frame* (Caroline). This box set compilation of sublimely artful tracks highlights the mystical beat that is Frippertronics, and disciplined chaos that sounds good simply because its makers are unbelievable musicians. As the music unfolds, it makes your head swim, and you start to wish there were still musically adept groups like this around to blow your mind. (Bonner)

Rise Robots Rise *Rise Robots Rise* (TVT). A succulent cocktail of all good things—rap, dance, soul, and pretty pop with a dash of industrial—this album winds up feeling a little like Soul II Soul meets Frank Zappa. And why not? This isn't a band, but a concept, sprung from New York's avant-garde Fibre. This stuff is great to just groove along to, but it also has substance—delicious *and* nutritious. (Farber)

Of Banshees, a fan she's.

Outside the Woodland Hills Tower Records in the San Fernando Valley, a thick, resolute line of about 1,500 people forms. The occasion is a rare in-store appearance by Siouxsie and the Banshees, and the winter light renders plausible the presence of every black raincoat ever sold on Melrose. As our Bret Easton Ellis primer tells us, Los Angeles works a certain dark charm on its teens, and looking for an emotional life on bleached suburban streets leads to strange diversions. Ask any survivor of 1990's Depeche Mode riots.

On the steps of the strip-mall, a fan stumbles out into the daylight, having at last seen Siouxsie. The pale youth falls into a friend's arms stuttering, "She was so nice." But everyone *knew* she would be nice. And word is moving fast: "She'll sign *anything*!"

Prostration is not unusual at the scene of Papal visits, but dig if you will the case of Siouxsie and the Banshees, in which devotion rises as the band's time line lengthens. Last year, sales of its latest album, *Superstition*, nearly brought the band its first gold record. Explanations are easy to come by, especially in L.A., where '80s-fixated radio station KROQ, has been laying the groundwork for years. (The "ROQ" is so stuck in 1982 that it now has a rep as an oldies graveyard.) There has also been quite a bit of listening at a big brother's or big sister's door by the Mattel Close-n-Play crowd. And the Banshees keep on moving. They went acoustic for the first time at a KROQ show for the faithful in Los Angeles last December.

KISS THEM FOR ME

Even so, the fans in line at Woodland Hills are remarkably young. One 15-year-old who had been waiting for 22 hours to keep his place describes his discovery of the band with the aged authority of a citrus grower bemoaning the bad frost of 1905. When asked "How long have you been a fan?" he shakes his head. "Years, years. Since at least sixth grade."

Siouxsie herself is gaily slicing through her autograph chores, sporting a set of rings that resemble shark fins. She looks a little different than she did in, say, 1981. We can see her face now that her hair is teased back, and, surprisingly, her eyebrows do not form a continuous line down the bridge of her nose. In sympathy, the trembling knot of followers in the Valley are dressed less like the old Sioux and more like new wave Zeligs: Exene/Ian/Bono/Smith/McCullough. A languid blonde of no specific rock persona in a tight black bra must be dragged from the dais, protesting, "But I'm buying CDs!" Later, when it is all over, Siouxsie is clearly moved. "This isn't a bottle of Evian water—these are the tears they left behind."

ALISON POWELL

ILLUSTRATION BY TOM BACHTELL.

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I'm home watching the news
Then that weird Bud commercial comes on
It was Michelle, she asks me what I'm doing, I tell her...
this noise!
Then I hear
I didn't play
I made it
Another
sell-out at
today's game.
when I hear the sportscaster
I just get to
the fridge
sports will be on soon
but there's no time to waste!
An ice-cold Bud would sure hit the spot
NO
Maybe it wasn't productive right now
but I'm gonna play better than ever
I'll be back
I'm a very busy person

Sheila E.

Barry White

RADIO GRAFFITI

therapy jamz

Has' weekend me and my homey Bönz, who both had our minds on loverz but couldn't be wit' 'em, sat around wit' a coupla 40'z and played sum of tha most obscure, yet therapeutic, jamz available. Bönz iz takin' a sabbatical so he asked me to write sum of 'em down so yoo, too, can wallow in self-pity.

"You Turned My Whole World Around," frum Barry White's *Sing for Someone You Love* album, was tha first song we played. His songs take yoo back to tha dayz when girlz wuz on yor thang for sum candy 'n' a pair of kikz. Barry alwayz had a way wit' tha ladies—he haz plenty of leftovers 'n' we're sweatin' over 'em like chicken wingz and warm beer. He blowz homies up wit' tha gift trip, but still gets that stuff.

Then Sheila E.'s *Romance 1600* waz scooped out tha crate. Her "Bedtime Story" haz a dose of sex flavor that even tha hardest rockaz'll swing wit'. If it ain't the music, then it'z that body—makin' ya entertain tha broken-heart theory that a biddy can drive a nigga to derangement. Layin' in yor bed 24-7, not shavin', abusin' tha bottle, 'n' thinkin' 'bout' who'z she doin' tonight? It'z a state as bad as Arizona 'n' as silent as tha lambz.

Just then tha schitt-face man frum thoze rehab clinic commercials cums on TV: "Yor kid'z a bum an he'z probably smokin' jax 'n' stealin' frum yor purse." He sez he can help! That bubble-face wuss could't help himself piss! We'd rather cruise with Dave Grusin than hear him pop tha barley hops. If yoo pick up Dave's *Cinemagic*, then check out "Theme From the Champ," or grab Jimi Hendrix'z *Electric Ladyland*—tha schitt 2 get wit' is the title track and tha deadly futuristic "1983." These joints roll thick like gravy, and are purr-fect for tha bluez! For B. Malone, this iz tha last boy scout.

RONNIN RO

Jimi Hendrix

Amnesty Corner

Last year SPIN pledged to help Amnesty International work for the release of six prisoners of conscience. Each month we update you on the status of these victims of tyranny, injustice, and, in some cases, torture, and ask you to write letters of support for one (or more) of your choice—in effect adopting your own prisoner of conscience. You can also contact Amnesty International, U.S.A. (322 Eighth Ave., New York, NY 10001, 1-800-55-AMNESTY) to learn other ways you can help. Protest works. Lots of protest works better, faster.

This column appears to be getting results we could hardly have anticipated. In addition to all the letters SPIN readers have been writing on behalf of our prisoners of conscience, SPIN received a letter claiming that one of the prisoners, Mexican political activist Jose Ramón García, was killed in the city of Cauatla, in Morelos, Mexico, and that his body was found in a cave near Rancho de las Piedras. The letter has been forwarded to Amnesty International and the report remains unconfirmed; however, Amnesty requests that readers suspend letter-writing on behalf of Ramón García while the matter is being investigated.

In other cases: Syria recently freed a number of prisoners, but this release did not include Riad al-Turk. Recent Nobel Peace Prize-winner Aung San Suu Kyi remains under house arrest in Burma, but has begun to receive correspondence from the outside world. There is no further news on poet Nguyen Chi Thien, rumored to have been released from prison in Vietnam. Amnesty requests that you send no more letters in Thien's behalf until details are nailed down.

Please support our efforts to free the remaining four prisoners. Every letter counts.

Riad al-Turk
President Hafez al-Assad; Presidential Palace; Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic

Orton Chirwa and Vera Chirwa
H.E. the Life President; Ngwazi Dr. Kamuzu Banda; Life President of the Republic of Malawi; Office of the President and Cabinet; Private Bag 388; Lilongwe 3, Malawi

Aung San Suu Kyi
General Saw Maung, Chairman; State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC); c/o Ministry of Defense; Signal Pagoda Road; Yangon, Union of Myanmar (Burma)

DEAR ELVIS,

My parents say you're the King. Is that true?
Rex Mandrake
Richmond, Virginia

Well, son, I'm gonna admit something here I never thought I'd go and tell. I ain't really the King like your daddy and mama says. Now don't go getting ornery at 'em for telling you a pop-eyed lie, 'cause they always thought it was the God honest truth. Plain damn facts is, I ain't never wrote no songs, and my singing's more like hellacious hollerin' that'd make a dog's ears bleed. It was just messed with in the studio to sound real good. And them moving picture shows I was supposed to be in was really acted by a city boy they did some of that fancy plastic surgery on to favor me. I couldn't act my way out of a wet paper sack. Hell yes, I'm ashamed. I'm turning beet red just writing this here letter.

Dethroned,
Elvis

P.S. I got ya all on that one didn't I?! April Fools. Only the true King could fool you like that. Dammit, I never cease to downright amaze myself. The King indeed!

JIMI HENDRIX PHOTO BY JOHN WILKES.

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FOR GIRLS ABOUT TO ROCK

Girls, when was the last time you really had fun at a punk-rock show? Did you make your way up front only to be shoved aside by testosterone-crazed moshers? Were the bands predominantly male? Was the girl bass player dismissed as token in the "chicks can't rock" vein? Are you sick of this?

Well, keep your ears to the ground. Revolution girl-style is coming. Girl groups like Bikini Kill and Bratmobile are taking their message to the streets with music and grass-roots 'zines such as *Girl Germs*, *Jigsaw*, and *Riot Grrrl*. Copping the militant 'tude of the '60s, like their D.C. brothers-in-arms (and boyfriends, in some cases), Nation of Ulysses, these angry young women are taking on the white male punk establishment. *Riot Grrrl*'s plans, spearheaded by Washingtonians Erika Reinstein and Kristin Thomson, include a summer convention and music workshops so other sisters can do it for themselves. Riot Grrrl Records and Press is also on the drawing board.

When asked about their inspiration, many of the women involved cite Kathleen Hanna, lead singer of Bikini Kill. Hanna, however, doesn't exactly have mass-media savvy—she declined to speak to SPIN and, with that, gave up the opportunity to reach thousands with her motivating voice. At a recent CBGB Bikini Kill show, many guys panted at the prospect of seeing Hanna topless (she had doffed her shirt at a previous gig), turning a potential act of defiance into an oglefest. Some of the older females present saw the show as just a Poly Styrene/X-Ray Spex retread. But to the younger, less jaded Goo-girls, Hanna is the Angriest Girl. They understand. They see this scary, sexy girl, who pogos while singing about sexual abuse, as the future of punk rock—where girls can have fun for a change.

Girl bands (lead singer must be a girl) send tapes to: Allison Wolfe; c/o Bratmobile; P.O. Box 1473; Olympia, WA 98507. Girls interested in *Riot Grrrl* activities can write to: *Riot Grrrl*; P.O. Box 11002; Washington, D.C. 20008.

DAISY VON FURTH

Bikini Kill at will. *From left:* Kathleen Hanna and Kathi Wilcox.

Saint Etienne elsewhere. *From left:* Peter Wiggs, Sarah Cracknell, and Bob Stanley.

saints beneath the paint

At last, a clue to the generation of British bands who've forsaken six-string servitude for the sampler: "I bought a guitar once," confesses Saint Etienne's Bob Stanley, "but I could never learn how to play—it hurt my fingers and gave me blisters."

So the former rock critic formed Saint Etienne with lugubrious pal Peter Wiggs, kvetching that "there aren't enough people taking advantage of what could be done with technology. Listen to something like those old Phuture singles. The ideas were completely *insane*—but everyone just took the acid house part. Or Derrick May's stuff—techno took one element of that and repeated it endlessly."

No one can accuse Saint Etienne of skimping on imagination. On the band's wildly ambitious debut, *Foxbase Alpha*, ideas collide furiously in a post-hip potpourri of collage rock: Swinging '60s vibes cleave to Jamaican electro-beats, tranced-out house startles Sunday morning whimsy; a Neil Young tune is covered and David Mamet dialogue is sampled. The record's one consistent element is the languorous larynx of the smashing Sarah Cracknell.

In producing itself, Saint Etienne seeks the kind of "brilliant noise" Phil Spector once perpetrated. And, like the Tycoon of Teen, Stanley and Wiggs are rearing a stable of puppet performers, starting with girl group Golden and the superbly named Cola Boy. When the latter's admittedly by-the-numbers single, "7 Ways to Love," crashed the U.K. Top Ten, even its creators were startled at how low the common denominator had sunk. So did they do it cynically or just for laughs?

"Both," deadpans Wiggs. "We laughed cynically."

STEVEN DALY

BOTTOM: RICHARD BURBRIDGE. TOP: MICHAEL GALINSKY

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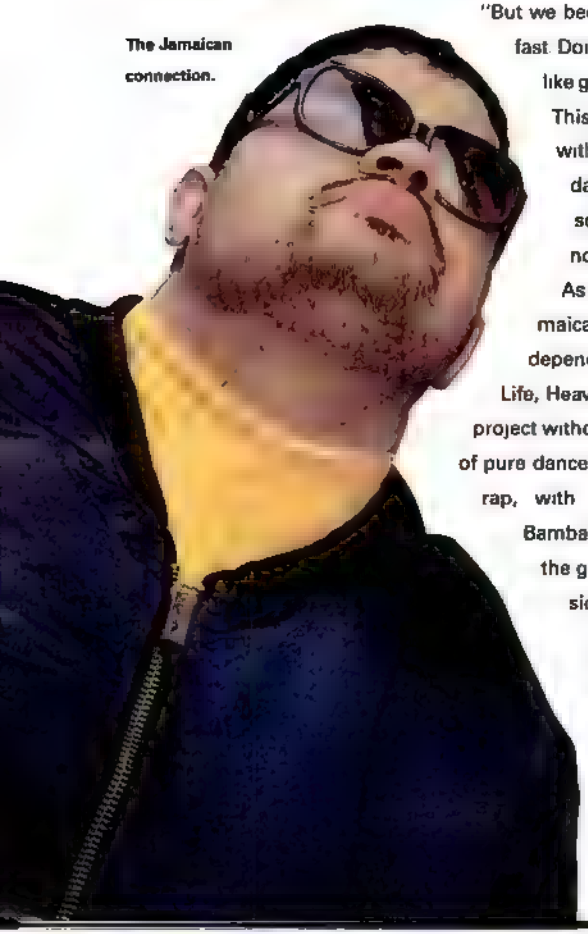
HE AIN'T HEAVY, HE'S . . .

Everybody in America knows who Heavy D. is. His voice and image as the overweight lover have been imprinted platinum-style onto the national consciousness over the last few years, and the unfortunate rap-basketball debacle in New York recently splashed him all over everyone's evening news. However, little is known of the Heavster's secret Jamaican life. Few realize that "Big and Broad," Heavy D.'s collaboration with dancehall greats Super Cat and Frankie Paul, recently bumped off the growling ragamuffin ruler, Tiger, for the No. 1 position on the Jamaican charts.

How did the hip hop nation's biggest lover develop this steamy affair with the kings of dancehall riddim? "Basically, it's my heritage," says Mount Vernon, New York's favorite adopted son. "I was born in Jamaica, and dancehall reggae is something I've always listened to. What the Jamaicans call DJing is very close to what rap is, and I was listening to that stuff before I ever got involved in rap. In terms of the lyrics, dancehall is even harder than rapping. They talk much faster, and it's more skillful."

So far, Heavy D. has recorded only one underground hit in Jamaica besides "Big and Broad"; his other is "Dem No Worry We," also with Super Cat, the rapper's all-time favorite dancehall artist.

"At first, Super Cat didn't have a good idea of who I was," admits Heavy. "But we became real good friends fast. Doing a Jamaican record is like going back home for me. This is something I grew up with. I heard patois every day, so it's natural. It's not something I learned as a novelty."



The Jamaican connection.

As well as releasing Jamaican music on his own independent label, Music for Life, Heavy D. is planning a solo project without the Boyz—an album of pure dancehall. "I saw the birth of rap, with Kool Herc and Afrika Bambaataa, and I also watched the growth of dancehall music," Heavy D. explains. "I've realized they're the same thing. Dancehall is definitely the future of rap."

DIMITRI ELLIOTT

hey, babe, take a walk in the waste land

Geriatric rock icon Lou Reed recently published *Between Thought and Expression* (Hyperion), a collection of his lyrics presented, alas, as verse. Stripped of fuzzy guitars and seductive backbeats, Reed's words invite—nay, *demand*—the serious consideration worthy of a poet, someone such as, say, T.S. Eliot. Thus, a comparison of the two poets' greatest hits reveals many surprising similarities.

	T.S. Eliot	Lou Reed
Title	*The Waste Land*	"Walk on the Wild Side"
Source of Inspiration Acknowledged by the Author	Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*; Sir James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough.*	Nelson Algren's *A Walk on the Wild Side*, "People I knew from Warhol's Factory"
Setting	"Unreal City"	New York City
Theme	Humanity clings to life in a decaying, spiritually bankrupt world.	There sure are a lot of weird people in New York City
Direct Reference to Sexual Confusion	"I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives, Old man with wrinkled female breasts."	"[Holly] plucked her eyebrows along the way / Shaved her legs and then he was a she."
Indirect Reference to Promiscuity	"Exploring hands encounter no defense."	"In the backroom she was everybody's darling."
Grace Under (Sinus) Pressure	"Madame Sosotris, famous clairvoyant, Had a bad cold, nevertheless Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe."	"But she never lost her head / Even when she was giving head."
Recurring Chorus Sung by a Dark Entity	"The nightingale Filled all the desert with inviolable voice And still she cried . . . 'Jug Jug' to dirty ears."	"The colored girls go 'Doo, do, doo, do, doo . . .' "
Depiction of a Mythic Figure Seeking Nourishment	"Mr. Eugenides . . . Asked me in demotic French To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel"	"The Sugar Plum Fairy came and he hit the streets Lookin' for soul food and a place to eat."
Pro-Drug Sentiment	"It's them pills I took, to bring it off"	"Valium would have helped that bash."
Historical Significance	Widely regarded as one of the most influential English poems of the 20th century.	Peaked at No. 16 on *Billboard*'s Top 40 in 1973.

JOHN SOEDER

MICHAEL BENABIB

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GS500E. For the name of your nearest Suzuki motorcycle and ATV dealer, call 1-800-255-2550. At Suzuki, we want every ride to be safe and enjoyable. So always wear a helmet, eye protection and protective clothing. Never ride under the influence of alcohol or other drugs. Study your owner's manual and always inspect your Suzuki before riding. Take a riding skills course. For the course nearest you, call the Motorcycle Safety Foundation at 1-800-447-4700.

THE COLD ROCK STUFF

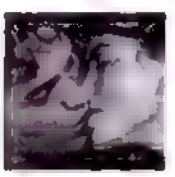
THESE ARE A FEW OF OUR FAVORITE THINGS

X-Large

Beastie Boy Mike D. recently opened this cool East Hollywood store, one of the few L.A. stockists for the Ben Davis and Carhartt utility duds. Overalls, jackets, and workshirts hawked by X-Large are of the kind soldered rather than sewn, and made of a fabric that seems a close cousin to the cinder block. The store specializes in custom '70s soul T-shirts, while heavy-duty shoes and old-school sneakers are also on the racks. At the back of the shop, a lone barber's chair waits invitingly. *Send $1 for catalog to X-Large, 1766 N. Vermont Avenue, Los Angeles, CA, 213-666-3483.*

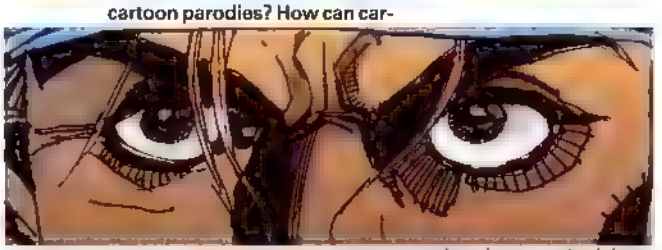
Sex Books

Remember reading *The Joy of Sex*, checking out its drawings of sexual positions, and learning about multiple orgasms and premature ejaculation? Now there's *The New Joy of Sex: A Gourmet Guide to Lovemaking for the Nineties* (Crown) to jump start an erotic revolution for the 90s. Dr. Alex Comfort, M.D., tells us sex is a must, and provides inventive ways to masturbate and copulate. For the more literary-minded, *Yellow Silk: Erotic Arts and Letters* (Harmony) is a recently anthologized journal full of stories, poetry, and art dedicated to erotica—"all persuasions, no brutality"



Comic Books

So let's see—Clark Kent never made an album. Neither did Bruce Wayne. But Prince did the soundtrack for *Batman*, didn't he? So does that entitle him to be a superhero? Evidently. But wait—weren't rock stars already nothing more than cartoon parodies? How can cartoon parodies be parodied in cartoons? Go figure. You used to need X-ray vision, flight capability, or a brain to be a cartoon marvel, but these days anybody who's made it into heavy rotation on MTV can be a comic avenger.

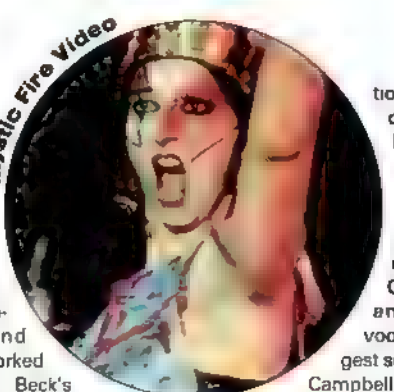


Compiled by Mark Blackwell, Staci Bonner, and Alison Powell.

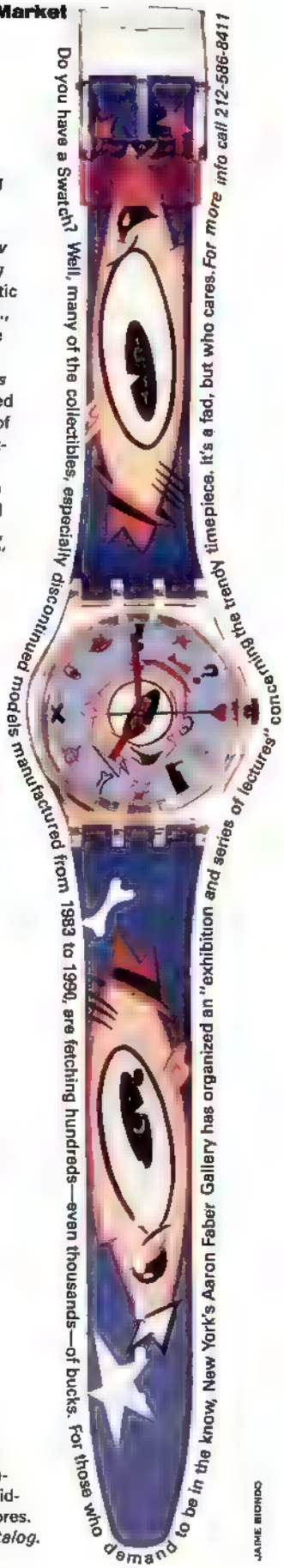
Weather Insurance

You know the old saying: You can only count on two things in life—the weather and taxes. Or something like that. But one thing that's true is you can never tell when the weather's gonna screw up your plans. Worldwide Weather is an insurance company that provides policy protection against inclement conditions for film companies, outdoor concert and festival promoters, farmers, and even paranoid vacationers. Next time it rains on your parade, maybe you'll make a few bucks off of it.

Mystic Fire Video



The founders of Mystic Fire, a tantric term for inner life and strength, worked with Julian Beck's experimental Living Theatre group in the '60s, and started this indie video company in 1985 to provide shelf life for hard-to-find underground movies. The selections are serious, but quite bizarre—including films about Tibetan medicine, cyberpunk, Gyuto monks, and Haitian voodoo. The biggest seller is Joseph Campbell's *The Power of Myth* series. Though the company began in someone's kitchen, you can now find Mystic Fire videos at over 2,000 book and video stores. *Call 1-800-292-9001 for a free catalog.*


Do you have a Swatch? Well, many of the collectibles, especially discontinued models manufactured from 1983 to 1990, are fetching hundreds—even thousands—of bucks. For those who demand to be in the know, New York's Aaron Faber Gallery has organized an "exhibition and series of lectures" concerning the trendy timepiece. It's a fad, but who cares. For more info call 212-586-8411

JAIME BIONDO

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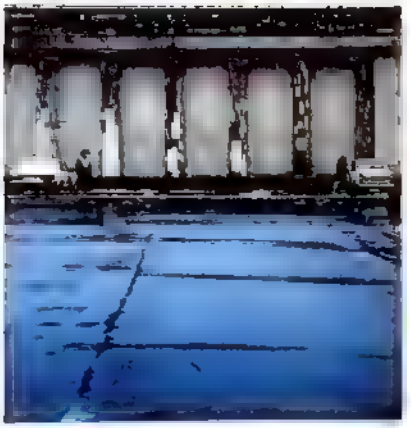
SPIN PATROL



Into the Arms of America: The long-anticipated U2 road circus has finally begun winding its way across our country. With MTV acting as the extravaganza's sponsor, could a contest to give away Bono's childhood cottage be that far off? Meanwhile, *Rattle and Hum* director Phil Joanou has voiced the possibility of making another movie featuring the lovely Irish lads.

Practice What You Preach: Stop the Violence helmsman KRS-One (a.k.a. Chris Parker), his brother Kenny, and several members of the BDP posse allegedly crashed the stage during the second song of P.M. Dawn's recent Sound Factory appearance in New York, getting physical with hefty but harmless rapper Prince Be. Although KRS denies it, Prince Be says he was set adrift to the floor and punched by KRS. The Edutainer only admits to grabbing the mike from Prince Be, his ill will due to some not-so-blissful comments P.M. Dawn made about him in a recent interview. "I simply got carried away," KRS explained in a press release. • **High Fidel-ity:** Former Minuteman Mike Watt has seized the title role in the upcoming Raymond Pettibon film, *I, Fidel*, in which the Firehoser will perform monologues from Castro speeches and from his own writings. When the Minutemen opened for R.E.M. in 1984, Watt dressed like the Cuban leader for the entire tour. • **There's Pot in Them There Hills:** Cypress Hill has become the official rap support group for NORML (the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws). The group will voice support and distribute literature in favor of marijuana and hemp legalization. • **Farm Aid:** A 33-year-old man in Rochester, New York, was arrested recently for the second time in two months after he was discovered hiding in someone else's cow barn. In the first incident, he allegedly admitted to police that he'd had sexual intercourse with one of the cows. The second time, however, he informed them that he was there simply to count the cows. • **Courthouse Mouse:** A new British band called Bomb Disneyland, described by some as "Motörhead meets metal funk," is being threatened with legal action by European Disney representatives. The group's debut album is scheduled for March release, and it plans to stage a concert in defiance of the mouse police near the gates of the new EuroDisney on the day the Paris megapark opens (scheduled for sometime this month). Elsewhere in Magic Kingdom–dom, the band Ugly Kid Joe was preparing to write songs for Pauley Shore's upcoming Disney film, *Encino Man*, until Disney front man Michael Eisner heard its song "Madman," about an "ax wieldin', child stealin'" psychotic on the loose at Disneyland. Eisner quickly axed the group from the project. • **This Band Really Sucks:** Vaginal Davis, the six-feet, six-inch drag-queen singer of Pedro, Muriel & Esther was arrested by Los Angeles police after an all-ages show at the Whisky-a-Go-Go, in which he selected several young men from the audience, removed their footwear, and sucked at their toes. Davis also allegedly performed several acts of fellatio during the concert. • **Farm Aid II:** A Romanian farmer, cleaning a slaughtered pig, was recently injured when the pig exploded on him. Farmers often use vacuum cleaners to inflate pig carcasses so the hair can be more easily removed with burning straw. This man's vacuum was broken, so he inflated his pig with butane gas. The blast destroyed what was left of the pig and hospitalized the farmer. • **Moe Better Blues:** IRS agents repossessed and sold Kool Moe Dee's 1991 Mercedes Benz 190E, after determining that the rapper owed $181,659.59 in overdue taxes from 1988. • **In the Studio:** KLF, Taylor Dane, XTC, Posies, Level 42, and the Band, featuring new member Billy Preston. • **On the Road:** Young Gods, Monster Magnet, the Blake Babies, L7, and the BoDeans. • **RIP:** Blues legend Willie Dixon died January 29 at the age of 76.

Achtung, Racist Baby: *No More Ugly Germans* is a hip collaboration of industrial and techno artists and producers based in Frankfurt, the current Germanic dance-floor capital, designed to raise money for organizations fighting the escalating racist terrors of skinheads and neo-Nazis. "We thought musicians should take a stand in this conflict," says project coordinator Heinz Roth of Eye Q Records. The album will be available in the U.S. later this year.

TOP RIGHT: ANTON CORBIJN

Z. CAVARICCI

PROFILES PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

individuals

lives are endangered

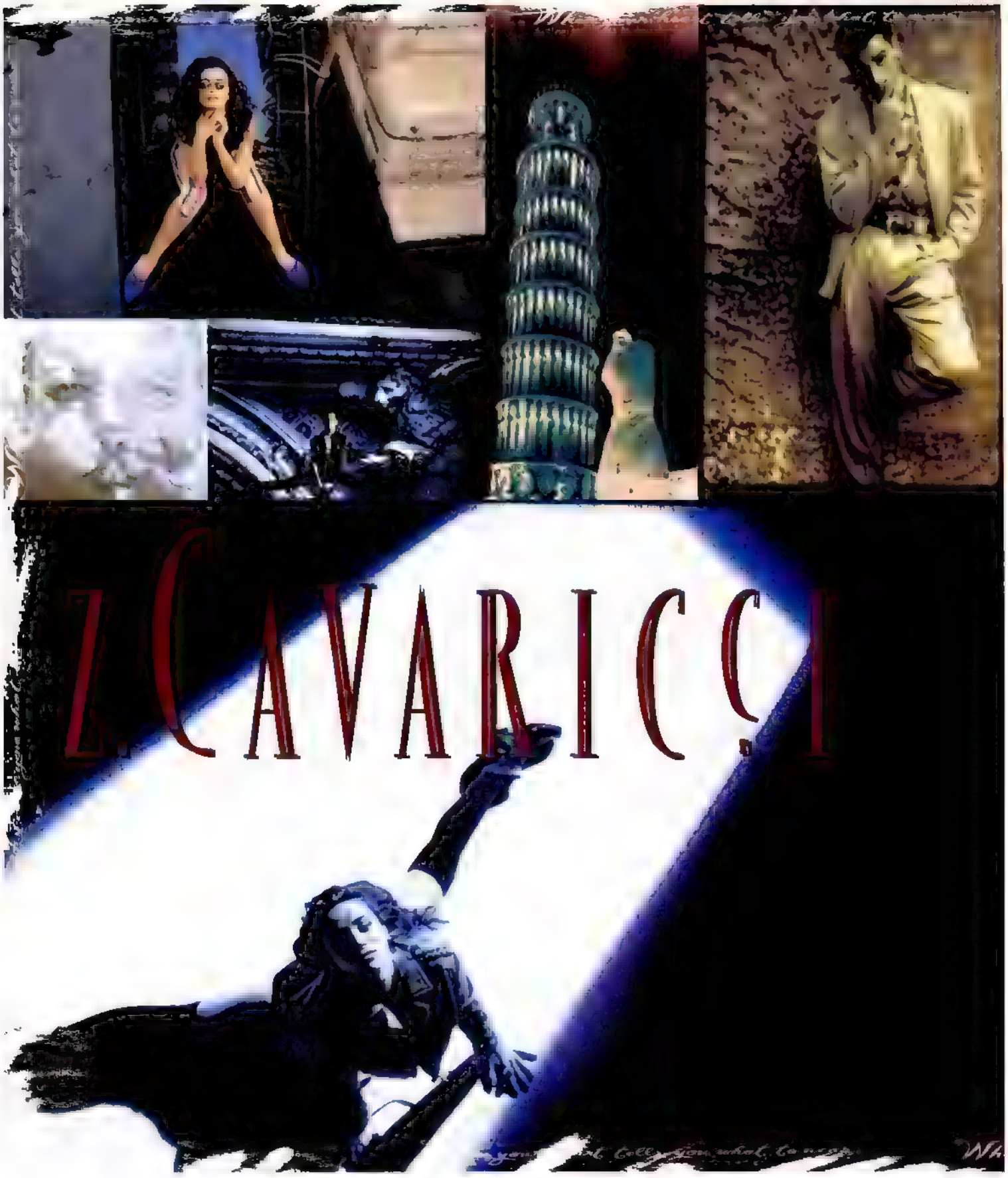
Riad al-Turk, Syria

free prisoners of conscience, ensure fair trials

Riad al-Turk may be dying in prison. A lawyer and former first secretary of Syria's prohibited Communist party, Riad al-Turk has been in prison without charge or trial since he was arrested by agents of the Syrian security forces on October 28, 1980. In mid-March 1991, news reached Amnesty International that he had slipped into a coma as a result of renal failure and had been transferred to Tishrin Hospital in Damascus. He remained there about 15 days before he was returned to the Military Interrogation Branch, the detention center where he has been held incommunicado since his arrest. Riad al-Turk is reported to have been severely tortured throughout his detention and frequently denied proper medical care for ailments.

Please write to the President of Syria asking for the immediate and unconditional release of this man who has now been held more than ten years without ever being charged with a crime: President Hafez al-Assad, Presidential Palace, Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL: Call [illegible] or write to Amnesty International, 322 Eighth Avenue - New York, New York 10001-4808.


ZCAVARICA

When your heart tells you what to wear
Spring
DILLARDS
Let your heart tell you what to wear
SAKS FIFTH AVENUE
BLOOMINGDALE'S

seven year itch

Long ago and far away—1985 to be exact—a new music magazine was born. Bob Guccione, Jr., asked GLENN O'BRIEN, a longtime contributor and one of the founding editors, if he remembered when.

You're darned right I remember 1985. Don't you? That was the beginning of SPIN. The first issue came out in March. Madonna was on the cover, photographed on the black sand of a lava beach in Hawaii by Herb Ritts. Readers wrote in asking us why Madonna had dirt on her face. We never wrote back. They must have found out by now. Is it really seven years! I've grown all new skin since then, and my dog has aged 49 years, but somehow 1985 seems like yesterday.

I remember the beginning of '85 very distinctly. When the clock struck midnight on that new year, people were glad 1984 was over. The year had seemed ominous to many people because of George Orwell, and then David Bowie singing "Beware the savage door of 1984." These were apocalyptic times, and 1984 had looked dangerous going in. But here it was '85, and we were still alive.

By 1985, what Big Brother meant to me was Janis Joplin's old band. The government didn't seem competent enough to be Big Brother in the sense of "Big Brother is watching you." It wasn't that Big Brother was watching you, it was more like you were watching Big Brother. The government just seemed like, in the words of Ed Sullivan, another really big *shew*. A rather lame diversion from the real arenas of power.

In January 1985, Ronald Reagan was inaugurated President of the United States for the second time, but he was inaugurated twice, once officially and once publicly, because of a conflict with the Super Bowl. The President might be able to take on any superpower in the world, but you can't fight ratings like that. The 49ers beat the Dolphins, 38 to 16.

Those were pretty good times. People were making money. They were buying BMWs and Armanis like crazy. Interest rates were high, but so were expectations. We charged it. Who's counting? People were buying junk bonds like junkies. Nobody had ever heard the word *crack* in 1985 (SPIN would introduce it to the American vocabulary a year or so later), but coca production still increased by one-third. In 1985, 12-step programs started to become hip and cruisy. Stand-up comedy also began to flourish. Eric Bogosian was performing *Drinking in America* at P.S. 122. A coincidence?

In the early days of '85 the start-up staff of SPIN magazine was working feverishly (there was flu around) to create a rock'n'roll magazine. Remember your vision of the magazine, Bob? Maybe you had a fever, too, but you had a vision of a magazine that was about music—not about a demographic.

The debut SPIN hit the stands March 1985. Eighty-two pages of rock'n'roll, and 17 pages of ads. It was pretty groovy, with U2, Fela,

Frankie Goes to Hollywood, Run-D.M.C., and Bryan Ferry. SPIN was a Pisces, and the newspaper horoscope for birthdays that day read "Communications are highlighted. Success in the arts, publishing. Your potential for popularity is unlimited. Consider carefully long-term family commitments. Don't sign anything."

That same month, Mikhail Gorbachev, 54 years old and also a Pisces, succeeded the late Konstantin Chernenko as Soviet premier. People were talking about the birthmark on his head. Somebody told me it was a map of Thailand. Iran and Iraq were at war that March. Israelis killed 21 Shutes and two members of a CBS news team in Lebanon. Bernhard Goetz was indicted for attempted murder.

Nineteen eighty-five was the Chinese Year of the Ox. We might expect this magazine to be hard-working, persistent, fair-minded, a good listener, and maybe a little stubborn. Magazines founded during the Year of the Ox tend to hang in there.

On April Fools' Day, 1985, Villanova beat Georgetown, led by Patrick Ewing, in the NCAA basketball championship game, scoring the biggest upset in modern times. Villanova hero Dwayne McClain later revealed that he was high on cocaine during the game and was high on cocaine in the White House when the team was received there by President Reagan. Later that month, Coca-Cola Company announced, to a public outcry, that the 99-year-old real thing was to be replaced by New Coke. The real thing was reinstated months later as Coca-Cola Classic in a move hailed by many as preplanned. But the real new coke was just around the corner: crack.

On May 7, baseball commissioner Peter Ueberroth called for mandatory drug testing. The same day, Malcolm X's killer was paroled. On May 13, Philadelphia police burned out a city block in order to eradicate the radical MOVE community.

On June 19, Claus von Bulow was acquitted of attempted murder. The next day, an unplugged Karen Quinlan died at age 31 after years in a coma. She went into a coma a nobody and died in it a celebrity.

In June, SPIN had the Talking Heads on the cover and a piece in praise of 7-Eleven by Henry Rollins on the back page. The July issue of SPIN had Sting on the cover in his bathing suit. Inside he talked about his new band. There was also coverage of the Pogues, U2, Nick Cave, Touré Kunda, Muhammad Ali, and the Beastie Boys.

Remember, Bob, that was the month you revealed in an editorial that you had been contacted by the angel Gabriel. Fortunately, you were not pregnant.

On July 13, the Live Aid concert was held in Philadelphia, drawing 100,000 people to see Madonna, U2, Mick Jagger, Bob Dylan, and Paul McCartney, among others. The next day, the Justice Department asked the Supreme Court to overturn *Roe* v. *Wade*. The next week, South Africa granted police emergency powers, and Rock Hudson was hospitalized for AIDS.

In August, Dwight Gooden of the New York Mets became a 20-game winner at the age of 19, the Pentagon announced that all new military recruits would be tested for AIDS, and Bruce Springsteen returned to New Jersey after a year of touring the world.

In September, Reagan apologized for saying that segregation had ended in South Africa, and the wreck of the Titanic was located in 12,000 feet of water off Newfoundland. That month's issue of SPIN featured an interview with Pat Benatar by Lydia Lunch.

In October, Keith Richards was on the cover of SPIN, and riots broke out in London. There was an interview with George Clinton by Greg Tate, and terrorists seized the Italian cruise ship Achille Lauro and dumped wheelchair-bound passenger Leon Klinghoffer overboard. There was a piece on the Blasters, and Israeli jets blasted PLO headquarters in Tunisia. There was a major exposé of David Crosby's life-style called "The Death of David Crosby," and President Marcos of the Philippines promised reforms.

In November, Bruce Springsteen was on the cover of SPIN, and Afghan troops surrounded the U.S. embassy in Kabul. It was reported in the press that Springsteen had turned down $12 million to do a Chrysler commercial. Tom Waits told SPIN he had turned down the same offer earlier, telling Chrysler, "Forget it! Go ask Bruce." Ed Koch announced that he would run for his third term as mayor, and Cathy Smith was indicted for the murder of John Belushi.

In December, Bob Dylan was on the cover of SPIN, and the Dow Jones topped 1500 for the first time. Winnie Mandela was jailed in South Africa. Corazon Aquino announced that she would run for President of the Philippines against Marcos. SPIN reviewed singles by the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Doug E. Fresh, Sonic Youth, the Cure, and "Dancing in the Streets" by David Bowie. If you can believe Angie Bowie, Mick and Dave were practically engaged at the time. And as the year ended, we all felt grateful to have survived the savage jive of 1985.

Remember, Bob, that was the month you revealed in an editorial that you had been contacted by the angel Gabriel. Fortunately, you were not pregnant.

It was a pretty interesting year, 1985. A turning point in a lot of ways. It was a good time to begin things and a good time to give them up. The time was right for SPIN to begin and for me to give up stand-up comedy and start making some real money. Punk rock was over but world beat was coming in.

We were young, fast, and scientific. We were good-looking, inquisitive, and caring. The world was opening to us like an oyster. We knew that what we had put away in 1985 would serve us well in later years. And we were right. I don't think about '85 all that often, but I am clearly reminded of it from time to time. It was sure a hell of a year for the grapes. If you don't believe it, just check out an Angelo Gaja '85 Barbaresco Sori Tilden. Hey, Bob, do you think Silvano has a bottle of that stuff in his basement?

Your friend,
Glenn

7 GREATEST BANDS OF ALL TIME

It's no easy thing, picking the seven greatest bands of all time. It's not like there's a guidebook you can buy somewhere that tells you how to do it (we looked). And it's not like you can just do it arbitrarily, because everyone has his or her own ideas on the subject, and no two people agree. I might, for instance, insist on both Queen and Creedence Clearwater Revival in the top seven, and how much fun would that be for you, the die-hard Smiths fan?

So we decided to go the consensus route. We asked all our friends and enemies, movers and shakers and belly achers inside the music biz and out, from Cher to Oedipus, to give us their lists. Some of these lists are printed here for your delectation; some are not, because we're putting out a magazine, not a book. Anyway, we took these lists, and in a very precise, scientific, detailed way that would take far too long to explain in layperson's terms (let's just say it involves a combination of math and our own ideas), we arrived at the seven bands profiled in the following pages.

The order in which these seven are presented is, however, completely random—if you think about it, it would be kind of silly to rank, like, the Beatles one or two ahead of, or behind, the Stones (especially when we all know Def Leppard belongs in front of them both).

Seven bands that made a difference, seven bands that mattered. The seven greatest rock bands. Ever.

These groups are all equally grand representatives—each in its own way—of the Majesty of Rock, and it's enough to recognize that without turning it into a beauty contest.

So here are seven bands without which the world would be a very uncool place.

JIM GREER

Photograph by Bob Gruen

THE SEX PISTOLS

It takes only one record, by the right group with the right haircut, the right attitude, the right song, and the right moral authority, and the world is changed. You can't predict it, because then it won't happen; but when it does happen you get on the roller coaster ride as fast as you can. Why? Because this is the future

You all know about this season's pop phenom. As Nirvana smashes its way through the U.S. and Europe, howling songs of pain and rebellion, it is single-handedly reviving the power of hard rock, indeed pop music itself, to go beyond simple consumption into the dramatization of real emotions. In doing so, Nirvana is lifting the lid off a raging mass of social and political discontent.

What's going on is best described by the man who fronted the group that kicked all this off: "The kids want misery and death," says John Lydon, known to the world for 18 months as the Sex Pistols' Johnny Rotten; "They want threatening noises because that shakes you out of your apathy." Like the Sex Pistols, Nirvana combines crunching rock with instantly recognizable melodies: In both cases, the front man has the power to conjure up the demons of the time.

It's not just Nirvana either: During the last two or three years, Sex Pistols' songs have been covered by heavy rockers like Mötley Crüe ("Anarchy in the U.K."), Anthrax ("Friggin' in the Riggin' "), and Skid Row ("Holidays in the Sun").

Two of last year's most successful hard rock groups, Metallica and Guns N' Roses, cite the Pistols as a prime influence, the latter to the extent of recording Steve Jones's "Black Leather" as part of an EP of punk covers. And it's possible to trace the Sex Pistols' influence on phenomena as diverse as the Beastie Boys, Bart Simpson, and even militant black rap. Not bad for a bunch of 21-year-olds who recorded only one album and destroyed themselves, with extreme bitterness, in San Francisco 14 years ago.

The Sex Pistols' story has now become myth: how manager Malcolm McLaren reluctantly tries to shape three London teens—Steve Jones, Paul Cook and Glen Matlock—into a group to promote the clothes in his "Sex" shop, how, after John Lydon arrives in 1976, the band kick-starts the punk movement; how as Johnny Rotten, Lydon becomes a national, then an international demon with the success of "God Save the Queen"—just as the world's media are descending on London to cover Elizabeth II's Silver Jubilee in June 1977.

The Sex Pistols are not just a pop group: They are a social, cultural, and political phenomenon. Then, just like the best myths, the story takes a downward curve. As a symbol of the Brit nightmare, Johnny Rotten and Paul Cook are physically attacked in London. Unable to write any new material and in dispute with its manager, the group releases its one full album, *Never Mind the Bollocks—Here's the Sex Pistols*, in November 1977; containing four hit singles, it is not the start of the band's career but a swan song. The Sex Pistols never record together again.

During their calamitous American tour in January 1978, Sid Vicious (who replaced Glen Matlock in February 1977), becomes the group's focus, much to Lydon's disgust. Once the group splits up, Vicious hogs the headlines; in October 1978, he is arraigned for murdering Nancy Spungen in the Chelsea Hotel, in February 1979, he overdoses on drugs in Greenwich Village, days before the trial that banishes the Sex Pistols to a legal limbo. Two months later, the British political uncertainties that the Sex Pistols dramatized are resolved by the election of Margaret Thatcher. The New Right finally kills the '60s.

Just like Elvis and the Beatles, the Sex Pistols were made by the media—in particular, television. In the U.K., a local TV show on which they swore made them national news at the end of 1976; in the U.S., a prime slot on NBC's June 1977 special, *Punk Report*, made them, and punk, infamous. By the time they finally set up onstage in the U.S., this hype made them objects of news coverage instead of entertainment coverage.

The Sex Pistols were not, however, the most influential group on the emerging punk scene. That honor falls to the Ramones, whose perfect first record, *The Ramones* (released in April 1976), set up what would be the punk archetype. short songs, wall-of-sound distorto guitar, bass carrying the melody, strangulated vocals, minimal drums. Once the Brit groups heard that record, they all sped up (especially the Clash). The Sex Pistols, however, were already in motion.

Like the other Brit punks, the Sex Pistols stole from the CBGB groups—in this case, Richard Hell's Television. McLaren spent six months in New York in 1975, and wanted Hell to front his gang of teenage reprobates. Hell refused. Nevertheless, Pistols bass player Glen Matlock wrote "Pretty Vacant" after seeing a poster for Television with its songs such as "Blank Generation"; the lyrics for the Sex Pistols' call to arms, "Anarchy in the U.K.," are an acrostic of Television's "See No Evil."

Looking at the two songs, you can immediately see how Brit Punk was different from New York punk, and why it took off The Television lyric is brilliant, poetic: "I understand all destructive urges," sings Tom Verlaine, "They seem so perfect." Compare

THROUGH THE YEARS: 1985—Pat Benatar on Madonna: "Well, what about her? I taught her how to fucking wear tights, man. Please let her do it for a while. I'm so happy someone else is doing it. Let her have a good time. Now maybe they won't look at the color of my panties, and they can concentrate on my singing." 1986—Billy Idol: "All of those business people should be fucking frightened. They don't ▸

A SAMPLE OF OUR VERY UNSCIENTIFIC POLL TO DETERMINE THE TOP SEVEN BANDS OF ALL TIME

Scott Krauss/Pere Ubu: The Velvet Underground, Public Image Ltd., The Jeff Beck Group (the band with Ron Wood and Rod Stewart), Iggy Pop and the Stooges, King Crimson, Gang of Four, Roxy Music

Steve Dollar/*Atlanta Constitution*: Parliament-Funkadelic, Ornette Coleman and Prime Time, Sun Ra Arkestra, Talking Heads (the 1980 version with Adrian Belew), Little Richard and the Upsetters, The Slut Boys, Beausoleil

Michael Timmins/Cowboy Junkies: The Velvet Underground, The Stooges, The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Flying Burrito Brothers, The Band, Neil Young and Crazy Horse

David Hinkley/*Daily News*: James Brown, Bob Dylan, The Lovin' Spoonful, The Five Keys, The McGarrigle Sisters, Joe Turner, Jackie Wilson

Evan Chern/WDNA Miami: ▸

SAUZA
CONMEMORATIVO
TEQUILA
HECHO EN MEXICO
CONMEMORATIVO
100% natural gold tequila
Authentic. Aged in oak barrels. Naturally gold.
No caramel color. For over one hundred years.
Decidedly different. Uncommonly smooth.

this with Rotten's statement on the same subject: "I wanna be an anarchist / Get pissed / Destroy!" Rotten doesn't understand, he *is*. This ability to communicate complex ideas simply is the hallmark of the Sex Pistols' success.

As far as the actual music is concerned, the Sex Pistols took from three main sources. Steve Jones learned guitar by taking speed and listening to the New York Dolls' first album and to the Stooges' *Raw Power*. The unstable guitar sound perfected by the Stooges, Dolls, and MC5 cloaked the band's more ambitious agenda: to insist on political action, using the idea of boredom as an energizer and the idea of a group as a gang with the keys to their city.

From Glen Matlock came the band's pop influence, borrowed from mid-'60s mod groups like the Who, the Small Faces, and the Kinks. All of these London groups played smart, restless, mediated songs, full of a foppish violence—like "Substitute," "I'm Not Like Everybody Else," and "Understanding," all of which the Sex Pistols played. And from John Lydon came the group's final twist into the spaces of mid '70s dub reggae and into the tortured vocalese of singer-songwriters like Peter Hammill.

The result was, contrary to the fact that they couldn't play, a highly proficient noise that stripped pop and rock down to their basics. Central to this was the phenomenal understanding between Paul Cook and Steve Jones, who had the same drum-guitar axis as the Rolling Stones. When you saw the Sex Pistols live or on TV, it was just like when you heard the Ramones—impossibly raw, impossibly fast, impossibly basic. By the time they released their first single, "Anarchy in the U.K.," it all came together in a sound that backed up the attitude.

After some ragged early tryouts, the Sex Pistols began working with engineer Chris Thomas, who had, somewhat ironically, worked on two of the biggest rock albums of all time: *The Beatles* and Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon*. Overdubbing Steve Jones' guitar dozens of times, and emphasizing Paul Cook's rock-solid drumming, Thomas created a perfect hard-rock base over which Rotten let fly.

When released in November 1976, "Anarchy in the U.K." was a clarion call for anyone who was pissed off with tired country rockers; more important, it gave a focus for anyone who was pissed off with everything. You saw the world in a new way—anything seemed possible. The fact that so many people felt like this when they saw or heard the Sex Pistols is the reason why the band remains so powerful today.

Their influence is all the more powerful in America for its diffusion. In the U.K., they were sucked up and spat out by the fast-moving media within two years; in the U.S., they flopped, and their influence was only traceable in forgotten local scenes—like L.A. or San Francisco in the late '70s—or in not-quite-made-it mid-'80s rock groups like Hüsker Dü or the Replacements. Sure, they might have started hardcore with "Bodies," but hardcore went places that neither the Sex Pistols nor the mass audience ever went.

Then several things happened. First, *Bollocks* went gold after nearly ten years, in late 1987. The bands that had been inspired by the Pistols' example, from U2 to Guns N' Roses, were emerging as the decade's biggest acts, and they named their sources. Hardcore rap groups like Public Enemy were formed, to mix the pop sensibility of first-wave rap with the militancy of punk. The whole idea of cultural provocation became central, sometimes with disastrous effects.

Today, America has moved from media punk to real punk. It's no accident that two of the most powerful U.S. images of the last six months—Kurt Cobain's shrieks for Nirvana and River Phoenix spacing out in "My Own Private Idaho"—feature the condition called narcolepsy, the tendency to fall asleep for seconds or hours in any position. You're a nation of sleepwalkers, they are saying.

In the late '70s, the Sex Pistols awakened England from its sleep. Their story is a beacon for any group that wants to make an impact outside the rock charts, on the life of its country. Do you ever want to wake up?

JON SAVAGE

Sex Pistols Paradisio gig: London, April 4, 1976.

think that I am anything much. I am not stupid and they should be scared of me. And worried." 1987—Joan Jett: "We were starting to see these articles people were writing about us, and you could feel the hatred. They wanted to know why girls were playing rock'n'roll, and do you think the fact that you got female skin makes the strings sound different. Different than what? I mean, I'm telling you, ▸

Jefferson Airplane, Quicksilver Messenger Service, Steve Miller, Fleetwood Mac (Peter Green era), Ten Years After, The Beatles, Free

Don Yeats/KCFO Seattle: Howlin' Wolf, Prince, Jerry Lee Lewis, John Coltrane, Hank Williams, Robert Johnson, Madonna

Thurston Moore/Sonic Youth: Black Flag (*Damaged* era), The Minutemen, Faith, Minor Threat, Butthole Surfers, Haino Keiji, Patti Smith

Kim Gordon/Sonic Youth: DNA, Static, Royal Trux, The Laughing Hyenas, The Boredoms, 8 Eyed Spy, Deep Wound

Grandmaster Flash: Earth, Wind and Fire, Michael Jackson, Sly and the Family Stone, Glenn Miller, Count Basie, Ella Fitzgerald, James Brown

Greg Kot/*Chicago Tribune*: The Mekons, Parliament-Funkadelic, The Velvet Underground, Pere Ubu, The Who, The Replacements, Cheap Trick

Scott Cohen/SPIN, contributing editor: O.V. Wright, James Brown (with the J.B.s), The Beach Boys, Bob Marley and the Wailers, Bob Dylan, Neil Young and Crazy Horse, ▸

PHOTO BY JOE STEVENS

SHOWN ABOVE: LAIRD HAMILTON BOILING WATER IN THE NEW AQUA SURF WITH THE NEOPRENE/SPANDEX COLLAR.

LED ZEPPELIN

Perfecting the hard rock pose, pre–hair-swing.

Jimmy Page was happily nursing at the wrinkled teat of British white blues professionalism when he was visited one night by a necromantic dream of a new kind of blues—a morbid, cosmic bombast. After gathering up a lanky pretty-boy possessed by spirits, a sturdy bumpkin armed with implausibly huge drumsticks, and a moody bassist from the English countryside, Page poured the blood of a suckling pig into a "666" scratched in the dust in thanks to his master and commenced his career as the world's foremost guitar god.

The howling lurch of Led Zeppelin, the first product of his creation, was followed by a series of albums that carved out a new space in our culture. Led Zep's strictly musical importance, as the inventor of heavy metal, is incalculable. "If I played guitar I'd be Jimmy Page / The girlies I like are underage," a line from the Beastie Boys' *Licensed to Ill*, suggests how thorough the band's influence has been. Touring like a battalion of cruel knights, the band established the paradigm of the irresponsible, appalling rock'n'roll way of life. It sent lumbering goons out to ensure teenage concubines, chopped down hotel-room doors, and tossed television sets out windows. And these guys thought an amusing sort of practical joke was to tell someone that a bag of heroin was actually cocaine: They were the original evil rock assholes.

But if Led Zeppelin's music sometimes offers a mimesis of the band's life-style in its raunchy excess, it is far from monochromatic. It's easy to think of Led Zep as a family tree surrounded by such acorns as Mötley Crüe, Guns N' Roses, and Aerosmith, but the "fathers of metal" tag doesn't do justice to the drug-sick dread and beauty of the band's music. As an exercise in recontextualization, play Led Zep's reverent tribute to Joni Mitchell, "Going to California," between *Court and Spark* and Prince's "The Beautiful Ones." Or consider the suggestion of a friend of mine that the initial wave of U.S. hardcore in the early 1980s was simply a fruitful misprision of Led Zep, as inept 13-year-olds tried to replicate "Communication Breakdown" in their basements.

More than any other band, Led Zep filtered everything it produced, from the music to the album-cover design to stage sets, through a highly self-conscious band persona, creating a powerful (if silly) framework of personal iconography. It's perhaps necessary to pass through a phase of despising the band for the ponderous self-mythologizing and disgusting rock star bloat that it embodied (as the 1970s pop press did, consistently snubbing the band as déclassé teenage fodder), but now we can move beyond such shortsighted judgments and open our souls to the visionary daring of the music. Although it may seem strange to say it of a band whose primary themes were relationships with underage groupies and the imagining of an Olde England with tax laws fairer to pop stars of obscene wealth, Led Zeppelin has left us a body of work of astonishing richness, each song a different color.

IVAN KREILKAMP

people were really askin' us these questions." 1988—Chuck D: "I manipulate the truth? You tell me another way to tell the truth to black people if they don't want to hear it straight out. I'm open to answers." 1989—Russell Simmons on the Beastie Boys: "I taught them how to fucking walk and how to fucking talk. I convinced the black community they were real." Mike D. of the Beasties on Simmons: "I'm sure ▸

Al Green

Sally Timms/The Mekons: Roxy Music, Public Enemy, Motörhead, The Meters, Captain Beefheart, Rebel MC (post-1990), The Flits

Jon Langford/The Mekons: Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys, The Ex, Jonestown, Captain Beefheart and the Magic Band, Slade, Buck Owens and the Buckeroos, The Meters

Henry Rollins: Bad Brains, Black Sabbath, Ted Nugent, Jimi Hendrix, James Brown, Black Flag, Thin Lizzy

Lloyd Cole: The Staple Singers, Elvis Presley, The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, T. Rex, The Clash, Kraftwerk

Bruce Horowitz/*Los Angeles Times*: The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, Jimi Hendrix, The Doors, The Jackson 5 (original group), The Temptations (original group)

Stuart Elliot/*New York Times*: The Glenn Miller Orchestra, The Benny Goodman Quartet, The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Talking Heads, Led Zeppelin, R.E.M.

Duff/MTV, VJ: Barry White and the Love Unlimited ▸

RETNA

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ATLANTIC

THE ROLLING STONES

The Rolling Stones on England's *Ready, Steady, Go* TV show circa 1964. *From left:* Bill Wyman, Brian Jones, Charlie Watts, Mick Jagger, and Keith Richards.

If one were to drill a dime-sized hole in Mick Jagger's skull, and then run a finger into his brain, the lippy singer would be in serious trouble. That's the case with any apple of the public eye—George Harrison, Sean Connery, Vic Tayback. From the concert stage to the silver screen to the groove tube, our heroes are nothing more than humans with providence on their side. But with the greatest legends, there exists an irrepressible magic that can't be denied or described.

With the Stones I saw this firsthand. It was June 1972, and the band was on its first American tour since 1969. The brilliant *Exile on Main Street* had just hit No. 1, and I had the privilege of traveling with the guys for a glorious but hazy few weeks. The '60s were over, ironically enough, the decade's spirit having been crushed in December 1969 under the helpless gaze of Jagger at Altamont Speedway. Just months before that tragedy, Stones founder Brian Jones had sunk dead to the bottom of his pool at Cotchford Farm near London, the estate on which A. A. Milne resided when he penned his Winnie the Pooh books. Death was everywhere: Hendrix, Joplin, Alan Wilson of Canned Heat. But the core of the Stones was full of life and would survive longer than anyone could imagine.

The last time I saw my favorite Stone, Keith, was on an A train to Brooklyn. He was on his way to visit a girl, and I was headed home. The subway was a source of endless amusement for him. He pointed out the "Canal Street" sign as we passed the stop.

"If a bloke was ta tayke a bit a paynt an' spray owt tha *C* on that sayne, y'know, 'Paynt it black,' sow ta speak . . . " he stammered.

I laughed at his reference to the Stones song from '66.

" . . . it wood say, 'Aye-nal,' wou'nt it?"

Keith continued to make obscure jokes about the stops. Chambers Street: "I been in a cop'la chaymbers me'self." Broadway: "Aye know a girhl 'at likes it tha broat' way." High Street: "Aye tink this is me fav'rite stop." Then, as he began to digress, I bade him goodbye.

"Mick sez e'll lock me in a box if aye don' give 'im back 'is blo'dy cup. An' aye keep frayin' me knickers, if y'know w'at aye mean."

I had no idea what he was saying, but I nodded and smiled as the doors closed.

Of course, when I think about it, these personal reminiscences are all lies. I was only six years old in 1972, and I wouldn't truly discover the Stones until my brother gave me *Some Girls* in 1978 for my 13th birthday.

The Stones are tough and ragged and beautiful. They were to the Beatles what Metallica is to Bon Jovi, and everyone knows why they were great. Next year, as the band begins its contract with Virgin, both Jagger and Richards will turn 50. Everyone knows they probably should have hung up their sequined jackets long ago, but they didn't, so may they live long and prosper.

MARK BLACKWELL

that McLaren will tell you that he dressed the Sex Pistols, scored all their moves, and was responsible for everything that happened. Russell will tell you the same thing about our success and hip hop, but it's not true." 1990—Tina Turner on her wigs: "A lot of hair I used to get came from Japan, and you can't color their hair; some of it won't even come up from bleaching. Through the years I've bought hair▸

Orchestra, Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass, The Jackson 5, Bob Marley and the Wailers, Sly and the Family Stone, Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes, Brand Nubian

Scott Donaton/ *Advertising Age*: The Beatles, Eric Clapton/Cream, Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band, The Rolling Stones, Simon and Garfunkel, Genesis, The Grateful Dead

Glenn O'Brien/SPIN, contributing editor: The Jimi Hendrix Experience, Led Zeppelin, The Stooges, Blondie, The Ramones, The Wailers (with Peter and Bunny), Parliament-Funkadelic

Diamond Rio (the whole band): The Beatles, The Eagles, The Osbourne Brothers, Aerosmith, Chicago, Bela Fleck and the Flecktones, J.D. Crowe and the New South

Rita Wild/ KLOS Los Angeles: U2, Bruce Springsteen, Melissa Etheridge, Peter Gabriel, Guns N' Roses, The Beatles, The Rolling Stones

Cher: The Beatles, The Eagles, Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band, Derek and the Dominos, Aerosmith, The Doobie Brothers, Led Zeppelin ▸

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THE RAMONES

The majesty of punk rock: Ladies and gentleman . . . the Ramones.

"Nobody's gonna like you guys, but I'll have you back."
—Hilly Kristal, owner of CBGB, to the Ramones after their first audition

At one time, boys and girls, the Ramones were the best band in the world. If they didn't invent punk rock, they at least codified it. In doing so, they reinvented rock'n'roll, adding a dollop of Stooge-ish abandon to the aggressive, less-than-serious approach of some of their fave groups (New York Dolls, Slade, early Stones, late Gary Glitter), and speeding everything up to exhilarating tempos. The best thing about the Ramones was that they had a high fun factor—Joey, Johnny, Dee Dee, and Tommy had no interest in changing anyone's world, or reinventing anything. They just wanted to rock.

The band began in Queens, knocking around in the back room of a paint store (Joey started out on drums), looking for a way out of their dead-end suburban nightmare. True believers in the redemptive properties of Great Rock, they felt let down by a moribund mid-'70s scene; the Eagles and Fleetwood Mac somehow failed to move their collective butt. Nothing left but to do it themselves, taking their Carbona-fueled visions into the decaying downtown New York art-rock scene and blowing it apart.

Because of their sometimes sick sense of humor, their obvious fondness for '60s bubble gum groups like the 1910 Fruitgum Company, and their insistence in early interviews on a corny unified image, there was a cartoonish aspect to the Ramones that they never really succeeded in shaking, and that prevented some people from taking them seriously. Which is fine, since they never took themselves seriously, except that it has possibly prevented the boys from receiving their just critical due. So let's set that to rights: No group in the last 18 years has been more important or influential, including this month's cover boys, the Sex Pistols (who probably wouldn't have existed without the Ramones). There's a real straight line from the Ramones to Nirvana, for anyone who'd care to trace it.

The Ramones' first record was recorded in one week for the punk rock sum of $6,400. Its release expanded the boundaries of what was possible in rock, and scared the hell out of a fat, self-satisfied music industry that was not used to having the course of music develop outside its purview. The fact that the Ramones have pretty much made the same record ever since (with occasional, usually ill-advised sorties into stylistic experimentation) diminishes their achievement not one whit. The Ramones' single-minded devotion to a very particular aesthetic—basically "Loud Fast Rules"—is a principled extension of the first law of what I guess you'd call rock ethics: Be True to Your School.

I hear the boys are recording a new album. Good for them, I hope it rocks. In a world where nothing matters, the Ramones almost do. **JIM GREER**

from all over the world. In my line of work, I choose my own look. I study television, I study my photographs, and I look at what's there. What's there is legs and hair." 1991—Mike Tyson: "When white people first came to Africa, we owned the land and the white man owned the Bible. When they finished, the had all they land and we had the Bible. So if there is a God up there, he don't like niggers."

Skinny Puppy: Godflesh, The Velvet Underground, Joy Division, Kraftwerk, The Doors, Brian Eno, Yello
Dave Mustaine/ Megadeth: David Bowie, Jimmy Page, Robert Plant, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Angus Young, Michael Schenker, Sean Harris
Rick Rubin/ Def American; producer: The Beatles, Led Zeppelin, AC/DC, The Doors, Aerosmith, Black Sabbath, The Ramones
Rhino Records/ A&R and publicity staff: The Ramones, The Who, The Rolling Stones (Mick Taylor era), The Beach Boys, The Temptations (with David Ruffin), Bob Dylan, The Parliaments
Johnette Napolitano/ Concrete Blonde: Jim Carroll, Nick Cave & the Bad Seeds, Tom Jones, Patti Smith, Edith Piaf, The Stranglers, Frank Sinatra
Tori Amos: Patsy Cline, Led Zeppelin, Béla Bartók (composer), The Sex Pistols, Lou Reed, Aretha Franklin, Simon and Garfunkel
Charles Koppelman/ EMI Records Group, chairman: ▶

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PUBLIC ENEMY

Public Enemy: Telling the free world what time it is.

If the Sex Pistols hadn't happened, who would have heard of Nirvana? If the Beatles hadn't happened, would we have R.E.M.? If not for Zeppelin, no big-haired metal bands. Without the Stones, whither Black Crowes? If not for Hendrix, well, ahem. . . . But Public Enemy, the babies of the bunch. Hmmmm Let's see now.

A great band brings its mythology intact and grafts it onto the society at large. Chuck D was the responsible adult as loquacious gangsta of polemics. Flavor Flav was the perennial side-kickin' homeboy, a one-man call-and-response chorus. Terminator X propped up the wisdom with beats. They were characters in an elaborate scheme, yet managed to make their arrival seem completely spontaneous—and completely necessary. The culture needed Chuck D and crew. The culture needed a "responsible adult" in a kid's game of macho posturing. The culture also needed controversy—awkward presumptions, band scandal, conspiracy theories—all to the tumultuous tune of cut-and-scratch fireworks. The culture also needed black noise.

A great band bites off more than it can chew. Because it thinks it can chew it all—check out *Fear of a Black Planet*. On *Yo! Bum Rush the Show*, Public Enemy did just that, creating a space for the more complex and sophisticated classic, *It Takes a Nation of Millions to Hold Us Back*. Recorded loud, regarded even louder, *Nation* brought Public Enemy to the "great band" threshold by providing listeners with a noisy, provocative newness. Yeah, that's it, newness. Difference with a vengeance. Rappers'll always tell you that they're coming at you with "some new shit." But they come at you with some rap-and-scratch-by-numbers bull. *Nation* didn't just break new ground, it became the new ground to break. And ain't hardly nobody done it yet, though some have tried. Politics *and* misogyny? At ear-splitting decibels when played at the right pitch? Forward-looking race politics *and* backward-looking sexual politics? But who could deny the mix? That is where the greatness is.

Dream about the Bomb Squad, I did. Couldn't sleep back in the late '80s for some Shocklee and Co. shenanigans messing with my brain Couldn't get off the train in Harlem or Strong Island without getting bludgeoned by the blast of alliterative assonance that was a—wait a sec, you're getting ahead of yourself.

As with the Sex Pistols, a metaphorical middle finger regularly rises to the top; like the Beatles', PE's press conferences became seductive, entrapping art forms; like the Stones, they painted it black all right; like the Ramones, PE created its own characters and wrote its own plot.

Like good greatest bands of all time, the Pistols got a SPIN cover, as have the Stones and Hendrix (who's, er, dead). What we waitin' 4?

SCOTT POULSON-BRYANT

Johnny & the Hurricanes, The Buffalo Springfield, The Lovin' Spoonful, Bruce Springsteen, Billy Joel, The Eagles, Barbra Streisand

Robert Clivilles and David Cole/C+C Music Factory: James Brown, The Jackson 5, U2, The Beatles, Parliament-Funkadelic, Earth, Wind and Fire, Aerosmith

Kev/Definition of Sound: The Clash, Public Enemy, Leaders of the New School, Bob Marley, Prince, The Doors, Soul II Soul

Kurt Loder/ MTV, VJ; writer: Dead Boys, Bruce Springsteen, Captain Beefheart, Alice Cooper (1971), Pink Floyd (1969), The Ramones (for all seasons), Jimi Hendrix

Mick Jones/ Big Audio Dynamite II: The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Kinks, The Who, Bob Marley and the Wailers, The Sex Pistols, The Clash

Lewis Grossberger/ *Mediaweek*, columnist: The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Spike Jones, Creedence Clearwater Revival, The Beach Boys, Johnny Puelo & the Harmonica Rascals, The Band

Southside Johnny: The Rolling Stones, Tom Waits, Big Joe Turner, Elmore James, The Flamingos, Van Morrison, Otis Redding

Richard Hell/writer: Bob Dylan, John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Al Green, The Band, James Brown, The Velvet Underground

Tom Moon/ *Philadelphia Inquirer*: The Clash, The Rolling Stones, Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band, Steely Dan, Hüsker Dü, The Police, The Beatles

Gene Stout/ *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*: Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band, The Rolling Stones, The Who, The Grateful Dead, Led Zeppelin, The Clash, U2

Tom Freston/MTV, president: The Rolling Stones, U2, The Byrds, The Band, Bob Marley and the Wailers, Neil Young and Crazy Horse, James Brown and The Famous Flames

Oedipus/ WBCN-Boston, program director: James Brown, David Bowie, The Clash, The Cocteau Twins, The Ramones, The Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin

Timothy White/ *Billboard*, editor: ▶

DANNY CLINCH

JIMI HENDRIX

The real paisley prince, Jimi Hendrix.

A true story: It was a slow Thursday night at the triplex movie theater where I am paid obscene amounts of money as a union projectionist. I spoke with concessionist Donna F., the most hard-core mainstream-rock fan imaginable. Cheap Trick is her favorite, but Stevie Nicks, Aerosmith, former Led Zep personnel, and Peter Frampton will draw Donna literally hundreds of miles.

In the middle of bimonthly detailing of the stolen riffs of *Led Zeppelin*, Donna demanded, "Why was Jimi Hendrix so good?"

Like any would-be metal deity, I answered for ten solid minutes: "Jimi Hendrix expanded the popular vocabulary of electric-guitar sounds so thoroughly that his contribution was comparable to the development of color photography after decades of black-and-white.

"Granted, some of Jimi's fundamentals were already familiar when he broke big in the summer of 1967, following the Monterey Pop Festival—Bo Diddley liked extreme volume and distortion, Pete Townshend smashed his gear, Jeff Beck conjured monsters-from-Mars feedback and hit eerily beautiful 'outside' notes.

"But before Hendrix, most assaultive or abstract rock instrumentation was used as embellishment, even gimmickry, with carefully defined boundaries. Jimi Hendrix integrated all the possibilities. He played loud and strong but so tenderly—look at his face in the films. He was both self-discovered genius and brazen thief of ideas. Traditional blues cadences gave way to square-wave speaker damage in the bend of a string. His rhythm playing was so intricate that it was almost lead, while his solos relied on repeated multistring figures. Even body language was impossible to separate from his technique

"No doubt, Hendrix's belief that all guitar noises were equally legit was enhanced by his use of LSD, a drug notorious for decalibrating one's normal sense of priorities. That Jimi's hands were so large he could wrap his thumb over the entire fretboard while playing normally with the other four fingers didn't hurt.

"Most importantly, Hendrix wrote from the whole cloth of his imagination. The postnuclear undersea retreat, "1983 . . . (A Merman I Should Turn to Be)" is no mere *song* brushing through the listener's day, it's a trip to Atlantis. "Little Wing" is but a delicate mosaic of small chords, trickling arpeggios, harmonics, and pick noise, yet altogether it soothes as much as any church hymn.

"He left so many kettles on the fire, among them jazz fusion (*Nine to the Universe*), large-ensemble work (the uncompleted double album *First Rays of the New Rising Sun*), and an unrealized interest in conventional music theory. Who knows where he would have gone? But since he's dead, he can't make beer commercials and will instead remain as an inviolate symbol of the overwhelming spiritual and physical potential of music." I think I gasped for breath then.

"He could have *given* that guitar to somebody instead of burning it," Donna admonished. Sterling Morrison of the Velvet Underground once told me the exact same thing. Yin flowed into yang again.

TOM NORDLIE

Bob Marley, The Beatles, James Brown, Jimi Hendrix, Brian Wilson, Keith Richards, John Mellencamp

Clint Black/country artist: The Eagles, Little Feat, Jimmy Buffett and the Coral Reefer Band, Mark O'Conner and the New Nashville Cats, Stevie Ray Vaughan and Double Trouble, Merle Haggard and the Strangers, Loggins and Messina

Ed Eckstine/Mercury Records, copresident: The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Who, The Jimi Hendrix Experience, Parliament-Funkadelic, Miles Davis, Stevie Wonder

The Veidt: My Bloody Valentine, Curve, The Jimi Hendrix Experience, Public Enemy, The Cocteau Twins, Nice & Smooth, Chubb Rock

Luke/2 Live Crew: Bust Down, Ice Cube, Janet Jackson, Prince, Hammer, Bell Biv DeVoe, A.M.G.

Willie "D"/The Geto Boys: Stevie Wonder, The Geto Boys, Lenny Kravitz, Al Green, Michael Jackson, Otis Redding, Wilson Pickett

Jordan Harris/Virgin Records, co-managing director: The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Doors, Marvin Gaye, Bob Dylan, Bob Marley and the Wailers, Roxy Music

Larry Stressel/Mercury Records: The Beatles, The Doors, James Taylor, Bruce Hornsby and the Range, Elton John, the Eagles, Van Morrison

Russell Simmons/RAL, chairman: Run-D.M.C., Public Enemy, N.W.A (Ice Cube era), The Beastie Boys, Al Green, L.L. Cool J, De La Soul

Patrick Goldstein/*Los Angeles Times*: John Lennon, Bob Dylan, Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry, The Rolling Stones, Bob Marley, Bruce Springsteen

Jeff Ayeroff/Virgin Records, managing director: The Mothers of Invention, Bob Dylan, The Rolling Stones, The Beatles, Bob Marley, The Doors, The Band

Lisa Robinson/syndicated columnist: The Velvet Underground, The Rolling Stones, The Stooges, The Clash, The Patti Smith Group, Led Zeppelin, Television

Ice-T: Public Enemy, Slayer, Megadeth, Ice Cube, EPMD, Naughty by Nature, Metallica

RETNA

BAILEYS

When I told Mark I couldn't see him, he told me to take a hike. So I did. Two blocks south to have a Baileys with Michael.

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THE BEATLES

The Ur-band. Turns out it's all their fault.

It's not like they were a *band* like the others on this list. Without the Beatles there wouldn't *be* a list. Apply the Big Bang theory of evolution to pop culture and it's simple. The Beatles were the Bang. The beginning of time. The Ur-band. They cannot be measured in terms of greatness because they are the measure itself. My friend Peter put it like this: "The Beatles were the prism through which everything that came before crystalized and everything that came after measured itself. Like Bach. That's all you have to say."

Before the Beatles, don't forget, rock'n'roll stars were primarily solo artists. The Beatles established the very concept of the rock *group* as we know it—an artistic microcosm that *evolves*. A band as a vehicle for a set of ideas, a range of expression—right down to haircuts,suit-cut, boot length, guitar choice, stage antics, sense of humor, politics, morality, and favorite soft drink. For better or worse, they spawned pop music's piggyback culture—all this *stuff* that isn't the music, but matters as much.

The Beatles invented the Band, in that sense. The concept of four individuals whose unique chemistry explodes into this accidental miracle that could not be altered in any way. The Beatles were perfect.

Click [*phone slams*]. That was Johan, the very tall, very opinionated Swede that writes for us. We had a fight. It went like this:

Johan: You're writing about the Beatles? Why? The Beatles sucked.

Celia: That does it. I hate you.

Johan: Well, okay, they didn't suck, but they were pretty mediocre. That they were the greatest or the most innovative, that's Stalinist, revisionist pop culture history. They weren't the first, and they weren't the best. Every so-called innovation on *Sgt. Pepper* can be found on *Pet Sounds*.

Celia: God, you're wrong. Why do you think Brian Wilson threw in the towel when *Sgt. Pepper* came out? Why didn't he finish *Smile*? Because the Beatles had made the definitive pop masterpiece and he knew it.

Johan: It's just stupid to say that's the only reason he didn't finish it. *Sgt. Pepper* is a pile of pseudopsychedelic drivel.

Celia: You're a horrible, horrible snob! It was a *tidal wave*. Are you telling me the entire Western world was wrong? That if they had only heard *Smile* first—that's fascism!

Johan: The early Beatles stuff was pretty good. But then they became icons. And as soon as they became icons nobody could tell whether they were great or not, and they still can't. Most of the pop culture lameness that has happened since is the Beatles' fault.

Celia: What were they supposed to do except what they did? They proved their sheer musical genius definitively with *Sgt. Pepper*. Listen to the damn thing.

Johan: But the ideas weren't original.

Celia: Yes they were. I don't believe music can be stolen. The concept, maybe. But the music itself, the notes, that comes straight from above. There's nothing to steal. Forgive the cliché, but music speaks for itself.

Johan: But honey, if music spoke for itself then we'd all be out of a job.

Celia: Exactly! I think we *should* all be out of a job.

CELIA FARBER

THE ONES THAT GOT AWAY (THE NEXT 7 GREATEST BANDS OF ALL TIME):

The Velvet Underground, The Who, R.E.M., Elvis Costello and the Attractions, The Doors, The Band, The Clash

Thanks to the Following People Who Contributed Their Picks for the Seven Greatest Bands:

Aimee/Sister Red; Joe B. Ames/*Alternative Press*, Tori Amos; Mark Andersen/Positive Force; Jeff Ayeroff/Virgin; Guy Bailey/The London Quireboys, Corinne Baldassano/ABC Radio Network, Charlie Baldonado; The Beastie Boys; Blind Melon; Eric Bogosian, James Brown/*New Music Express*; Frank Camarata/CBS Radio Network; The Cavedogs; Ingrid Chavez; Cher; Evan Chern/WDNA Miami, Thomas C. Chiusano/WXRK New York, Robert Civilles and David Cole (C + C Music Factory); Scott Cohen; Marc Cohn; Lloyd Cole; Gerard Cosloy/Matador; Marshall Crenshaw; Evan Dando/The Lemonheads, Erik Davis; Clive Davis/Arista; Jody Denberg/KGSR Austin; Diamond Rio; Pat DiNizio/The Smithereens; Rick Dobbis/Polygram; Steve Dollar/*Atlanta Constitution*; Scott Donaton/*Advertising Age*; Duff/MTV Ed Eckstine/Mercury; Chuck Eddy; Dimitri Ehrlich/*Interview*, Stuart Elliot/*New York Times*, Pat Evans/KROG San Francisco; Eric Drew Feldman/Pere Ubu; Billy Ficca, Tim Finn; Lita Ford, Tom Freston/MTV; Richard Gehr; Greg Ginn/SST; Daniel Glass/EMI, Mitch Golan/WPLJ New York; Patrick Goldstein/*Los Angeles Times*; Kim Gordon/Sonic Youth, Gary Graff/*Detroit Free Press*; Grandmaster Flash; Grapes of Wrath, Lewis Grossberger/*Mediaweek*; Edna Gunderson/*USA Today*; Jordan Harris/Virgin; Richard Hell; David Hinkley/*Daily News*, Bill Holdship; Gary Holt; Susie Honeyman, Bruce Horowitz/*Los Angeles Times*; Georgia Hubley/Yo La Tengo; Tama Janowitz; Mick Jones; Kev/Definition of Sound; Kim/Jawbox, David Kleiler/The Volcano Suns; Charles Koppelman/EMI; Greg Kot/*Chicago Tribune*; Scott Krauss/Pere Ubu; Patti LaBelle; Gary Landis/Westwood One; Jon Langford; Michael Lavine; Ed Lennon/WBC Indianapolis; Richard Lloyd/Television, Kurt Loder; Luke/2 Live Crew; Maggie's Dream; Ann Magnuson, Tony Maimone/Pere Ubu; Richard Marx; Klaus Meine/Scorpions; Tom Moon/*Philadelphia Inquirer*; Thurston Moore, John Motivan/*Inside Media*, Reed Mullin/Corrosion of Conformity; Dave Mustaine; Mike Myers; Johnette Napolitano; Ned's Atomic Dustbin; Glenn O Brien, Oedipus/WBCN Boston, Mike Osbourne/WBRU Providence; Richard Palmese/MCA, Jesse Peretz The Lemonheads; Jon Poneman/Sub Pop; Rhino; Cory Robbins/Profile; Wayne Robins/*Newsday*; Lisa Robinson; Anne Robinson/Windham Hill; Nile Rodgers; Rick Rubin; Jon Schecter/*The Source*; Second 2 None; Davitt Sigerson/Polydor; Darrell Simon/*Houston Sun*, Skinny Puppy; Muzz Skillings; Fred Smith/Television, Southside Johnny; Curtis Stigers; Doug Stone; Gene Stout/*Seattle Post-Intelligencer*; Larry Stressel/Mercury; Clay Tarver/Bullet LaVolta; They Might Be Giants; Richard Thompson; Michael Timmins, Sally Timms/The Mekons; The Veldt; Timothy White/*Billboard*; Rita Wild/KLOS Los Angeles, Willie "D"; Mike Wolf/Amphetamine Reptile, Don Yeats/KCFO Seattle.

RETNA

7s

Seven Chart-Toppers You Won't See on MTV

1) Mexico's biggest pop star, **Luis Miguel**, had his first hit album at the age of 12. His latest album, *Romance*, a collection of boleros, sold 400,000 copies in the first ten days after its release. Although he sings in Spanish, Miguel's albums have also hit No. 1 in Italy, Germany, Holland, and Greece.
2) **Tito Puente**, the Latin mambo king, has sold millions of records worldwide since his first hit single in 1949, "Abaniquito." He recently celebrated the release of his 100th album, *El Numero Cien*, which was nominated for a Grammy.
3) Indian singer **Lata Mangeshker** has recorded more songs than anyone in the world—well over 25,000 songs to date, as reported in the *Guinness Book of World Records*.
4) Greek singer **Nana Mouskouri** has had 800 albums released in seven different languages. She sells about two million copies each year.
5) Japanese pop singer **Tatsuro Yamashita** has released nine albums, all of which immediately went platinum in Japan. His *Christmas Eve* disc sold over seven million in Japan and Hong Kong Yamashita's songs are influenced by the Beach Boys, the Coasters, and the Drifters.
6) **Cui Jian**, China's first rock superstar, composed the unofficial anthem of the student protest in Tiananmen Square, "Nothing to My Name." Although it's impossible to estimate the extent of his audience, millions of his tapes are sold to Chinese youth, partly through underground markets.
7) Surprise, surprise: The world's best selling musical artist of all time isn't Elvis or the Beatles—it's **Bing Crosby**, whose total worldwide album sales exceed 300 million as of press time.

Seven Guys Named MICK

Mick Jagger
(Rolling Stones)
Mick Hucknall
(Simply Red)
Mick Fleetwood
(Fleetwood Mac)
Mick Jones
(Foreigner)
Mick Talbot
(Style Council)
Mick Jones
(Big Audio Dynamite)
Mick Mouse
(mouse)

Seven Ways to Kill a Rock Star

1) Write a sympathetic profile on him (or her) for the *New York Times Magazine*.
2) Encourage him to sign autograph for wild-eyed fan carrying *The Catcher in the Rye*.
3) When he asks directions to the local NA meeting, point him toward the local NRA meeting.
4) Take him to a hip hop charity event and provoke him into loudly announcing, "These rap guys are just a bunch of pussies."
5) Introduce him to Jeff Lynne.
6) Induct him into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.
7) Reach into his chest and rip his heart out like Arnold Schwarzenegger did to that biker guy in the first *Terminator* movie.

Seven Moments From the Rock Version of *It's a Wonderful Life*

1) Vanilla Ice dies after being stabbed in the ass, thus making room for the rise of M.C. Kevin, a seven-year-old scamp with the freshest rhymes on the block: "My Retainer," "Fear of a Black Room," "Straight Outta Elementary," and "Swimming Certificate."
2) David Lee Roth stays with Van Halen. The other three members are relegated to the orchestra pit. Songs become breaks between Roth's stand-up shtick. The band moves to Vegas. Dave's fifth marriage breaks up, and he can't fit into his spandex pants. He's found dead on a toilet seat swaddled in a giant diaper. As Eddie Van Halen reaches for his Rolodex, a news flash announces that Sammy Hagar perished in a high-speed car crash earlier that day.
3) Nobody saves Elton John's life tonight; he carries through suicide impulse. Bernie Taupin's book of poetry, *If I Was a Sculptor, but Then Again No*, becomes a best-seller among lonely post-adolescents. Taupin later hooks up with Andrew Lloyd Webber; their musical, *Honky Cats*, runs and runs. George Michael has no one to emulate when he wants to go in a more mature direction. Wham! stays together and the two become figures of ridicule.
4) Michael Jackson dies after the Pepsi conflagration. LaToya and Jermaine vent frustration on Janet.
5) The Beatles' *Abbey Road* cover really does mean Paul is dead. Lennon tries working with Bernie Taupin to no avail. Beatles carry on as a trio. Harrison and Starr are cowed by Lennon's will; made to jump through hoops by Yoko, who forces Ringo to play papier-mâché drums.
6) Madonna dies swallowing Vichy bottle. Her entourage continues laughing admiringly as she chokes to death. Every female singer starts talking dirty and squeezing into lingerie. Amy Grant's "I Take the Missionary Position" sparks controversy.
7) Bushwick Bill dies when his girlfriend shoots him. M.C. Kevin joins Geto Boys, hits big with "The Clown's Playing Tricks on Me."

Seven Reasons Why Seven-Inch Singles Are Dying

1) Nobody buys them.
2) Nobody sells them.
3) Nobody has a turntable anymore.
4) They're too big to fit into a CD player.
5) They're not dying. The record industry and the media are lying to you.
6) They cost a lot, considering the fact that they only have a couple of songs on them, and the economy is really bad and everything.
7) Nobody has any more of those little plastic things that fit into the center of singles so you can play them.

Seven Names for Those Little Plastic Things That Fit Into the Center of Singles So You Can Play Them

1) doohickeys
2) spindles
3) swastikas
4) SPIN graphic elements at the end of articles
5) Myrtle
6) 45 adapters
7) those-little-plastic-things-that-fit-into-the-center-of-singles-so-you-can-play-them

Seven Most Popular Causes Endorsed by Rock Stars

1) Amnesty International
2) Greenpeace
3) PETA
4) Walden Woods
5) Free Speech
6) Education
7) Bow Hunting

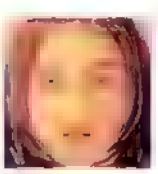
Seven '70s Songs That Guns N' Roses Should Cover After "Live and Let Die"

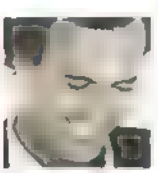
1) "Bennie and the Jets"
2) "Bohemian Rhapsody"
3) "Carry On Wayward Son"
4) "Cat's in the Cradle"
5) "Time in a Bottle"
6) "Nobody Does It Better"
7) "Aqualung"

Seven Top-Grossing Musical Entertainers in America During 1991

1) New Kids on the Block: earned $54,000,000.

2) Michael Jackson: $25,000,000.


3) Madonna: $24,000,000.


4) Julio Iglesias: $23,000,000.

5) Janet Jackson: $18,000,000.

6) Paul McCartney: $15,000,000

7) The Rolling Stones. $11,000,000.

(source: *Forbes* magazine)

Lush

Ethereal Girls 1: DAVID QUANTICK on Lush, indie rock's gigglers with lassitude.

lush life

On records such as *Scar*, *Gala*, and the recent *Black Spring* EP, Lush presents a vision that is sometimes pure stratospheric waltzing, sometimes ethereal thrash-core, and sometimes (as on the band's version of Abba's "Hey Hey Helen") just plain absurd.

In person, the tiny-pearl-dropped-into-milky-ocean-of-serenity vibe of Lush's music is seriously countered by a quartet of people who tell each other to "fuck off" with almost rhythmic regularity and were a longtime fixture on London's party-hearty "scene that celebrates itself." Combine this with guitarists Miki Berenyi and Emma Anderson's high, celestial punk voices and the churning spookiness of Lush songs, and it's easy to see why people get confused.

"A lot of people have said that we're very one-dimensional, that it's just a load of slow songs," says Berenyi. "But there is rocking out. We rock out, do you know what I mean?"

The group members shrug and giggle annoyingly when asked who they think their audience might be. Bassist Steve Rippon (who recently left the band and moved to Australia) tries to be helpful: "The audience is a lot younger than us. What I think is weird is that we all listen to a lot of people's stuff and what we play is not the same as the stuff we listen to, but the people who listen to our stuff, the things that they like are not anything that any of us like."

There is a round of nodding. Certainly, in a world where alternative music is becoming increasingly popular and groups of hairy lads with samples are scaling the charts, Lush doesn't quite fit in.

"You go to alternative clubs anywhere and it's all the same records now," says drummer Chris Acland, sighing. "Ned's Atomic Dustbin, and Carter the Unstoppable Sex Machine, and—"

"I feel we're outside of all that," explains Anderson. "I don't feel an affinity with any bands at all, musically. These clubs don't play our records."

Lush knows what it wants. Except, when pressed, the band can't seem to think of it. Finally, after a storm of snorts and giggles, the members of Lush try to reveal their desires.

"A hot cup of tea," says Berenyi, hopelessly. "I'd like to get to the point where we take things more in our stride," says Anderson, sensibly. Steve agrees: "It would be nice to be more like R.E.M. They've done it gradually and they're where they want to be."

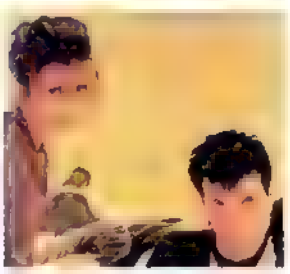
"Hey," Berenyi and Anderson suddenly shout in unison. "Respect!"

ETHEREAL

IN THE U.S., THE THORNY QUESTION OF WOMEN IN rock has been resolved in a fairly straightforward manner. Women are either totally excluded (as with Sub Pop grunge bands or post-Replacements wasted youth), or they are integrated into groups as though it were perfectly natural. In the British alternative scene, the situation is more confused: There seem to be more women, but really, they're just more visible, fronting otherwise all-male bands.

Four years ago, the U.K. witnessed a plague of power-pop blondes in the Debbie Harry mold. More recently, there has been a bumper crop of bands with "ethereal" girl singers in the tradition of Liz Fraser of the Cocteau Twins. But whether they're peroxide blondes or otherworldly enigmas, these singers are the focus of an unsavory degree of attention from boy fans and boy critics.

Ironically, the ethereal girls have adopted their images precisely to avoid being transfixed by the male gaze. Being ethereal is a good compromise between the desire to be glamorous and an aversion to being ogled. Being otherworldly implies being out of reach, shaking off mundane definitions and demands. Unlike the standard-issue women-in-rock stereotypes (the platinum blonde airhead, the vamp, the earth-mother folk maiden, the lady-sings-the-blues victim), the ethereal persona is not so easy for men to incorporate into their squalid fantasies.



The Sundays

The ethereal tradition began with singers like Kate Bush and Siouxsie Sioux, who used such otherworldly archetypes as the Witch and the Ice Queen as material for fantasies of autonomy, of escape from the bonds of banality and the mire of domesticity. Later came Liz Fraser, shrouding herself in an unworldly aura of child-woman innocence.

Kate Bush

Unfortunately, this image tends to invite a more sophisticated male gaze, one that rhapsodizes rather than drools—but just as surely turns the chanteuse into an object of fantasy. Björk Gudmundsdottir of the Sugarcubes was rapturously characterized as a sprite-like enigma, an Icelandic elf-girl, and since her band debuted, there has been an almost annual unveiling of the "new Sugarcubes." In 1990, it was the turn of the **Sundays**, featuring the winsomely forlorn vocals of Harriet Wheeler. Last year's "new Sugarcubes" was **Curve** *(see article opposite)*, a duo consisting of pop craftsman Dean Garcia and stunning *über*-babe Toni Halliday.

Revealingly, a critic quickly defined the subject of Curve's

TOP LEFT: KEVIN WESTENBURG

GIRLS

In Britain, alternative women rockers have broken out of the tired old stereotypes. They've created a new one—the ethereal girl. SIMON REYNOLDS empathizes.

cryptic songs as "a loss of innocence . . . or rather, its forcible removal." Part of ethereal girl singers' allure involves their (violated) fragility, and the scope they provide for fantasies in which the man figures as a knight in shining armor come to the maiden's emotional rescue. Better still is if the girl is mentally unbalanced, like the woman French actress Beatrice Dalle plays in *Betty Blue*.

The *Betty Blue* syndrome is a factor in the adulation of another ethereal girl group, **Cranes**. Framed in her band's unsettling techno-goth soundscapes, singer Alison Shaw's disturbed and disturbing voice almost demands speculation about the traumas that shaped it. As with Curve's Halliday, Shaw appeals to the kind of young men who want a girl they can save and heal. Which is a pity, because Cranes are one of the few really startling groups to emerge from the U.K. in recent years, as the band's *Wings of Joy* EP abundantly proves.

Other ethereal girl groups inspiring fervor include **Sunshot** (a Cranes-like fusion of avant-noise assault and pedophile appeal), **Lush** *(see article opposite)*, **Bleach** (more abrasively cathartic, but vocalist Salli has been paid an unseemly amount of attention), the **Butterflies** (ghostly yet raunchy Danya Dehase sings over a Hüsker Dü–meets–Black Crowes backing), and **Moonshake** (chanteuse Margaret Fielder entwined in a post–My Bloody Valentine blur).

Shaping up as 1992's "new Sugarcubes" are the **Cranberries**, from Limerick, Ireland: dreamy swirl pop, midway between the Smiths and the Cocteau Twins cradling the will-o'-the-wispy vocals of Dolores O'Riordan. But it could be that the ethereal girl craze has now peaked, as the influence of U.S. bands like Babes in Toyland and Hole permeates the scene. Less amenable to male voyeurism and fantasy, these groups' traumatized lyrics and violently cathartic vocals are inspiring a new breed of British chanteuses such as P.J. Harvey, and Kirsty Yates from Earwig.

To an extent, the focus on desirable singers is understandable. Fantasy and emotional-sexual projection are part of the pop experience: We hallucinate the singer as friend or lover. And in the British rock press, writers have traditionally been allowed to explore their subjective responses to music—the way it entangles with dreams and desires. What's creepy is that the writers who pen these gushing paeans are invariably male, perhaps because the tiny minority of female rock critics are too aware of what it feels like to be objectified to want to do it to anyone. Bizzarely, when references are made to the "fuckability" of singers like Mark Gardner of Ride or Tim Burgess from the Charlatans UK, they're invariably the work of male journalists. It's as if they're self-consciously trying to redress the imbalance, atone for their sins by articulating the silent desires of the girls in the audience.

Ethereal Girls 2: SIMON REYNOLDS asks, Is Curve too good to be true?

curvacious

"I absolutely believe there's no point to anything if it's devoid of glamour," says Toni Halliday, singer for England's Curve. "The kind of glamour I love isn't models posing in expensive clothes, but someone like Patti Smith. Glamour's not about perfection, it's about character."

Halliday's peeved about her U.S. record company's wrong-headed marketing ideas, which involve precisely the kind of stylized glamour she detests. "They want us to do shoots for fashion magazines, and I had to tell them I'm not a fucking model." The 27-year-old Halliday and partner Dean Garcia are music-biz veterans who've had their fingers burned too many times before; with Curve, they want to be presented exactly right.

Six years ago the pair were 50 percent of State of Play, a group totally bound to mid-'80s state-of-the-art values. "We were really high tech and overproduced," confesses Halliday. Despite the patronage of the Eurythmics' Dave Stewart, State of Play flopped. When the group split acrimoniously, Halliday embarked on an abortive solo career, and Garcia exiled himself to a Spanish village.

After a four-year estrangement, Halliday and Garcia made up and decided to give stardom another shot, attuning their new music to a totally new set of Brit-rock values. Curve's debut EP, *Blindfold* (released on Dave Stewart's Anxious label in early 1991), was greeted rapturously by the British rock press. But by its second EP, *Frozen*, the backlash began: Skeptics complained that Curve was just too hip, that the band's music was a composite of fashionable elements calculated to appeal to rock critics.

What Curve has derived from bands such as the Cocteaus and the Valentines, though, is not so much specific ideas as a spatial approach to sound, what Halliday calls "musical landscaping." Curve thinks of songs in terms of the "air bit" or "the desert bit," rather than bridges or middle eights. Dean crafts the lush, turbulent soundscapes. Halliday titles such as "Sandpit," "Split Into Fractions," and "Clipped," from Curve's latest LP, *Doppelgänger*, hint at paralysis, claustrophobia, entrapment. Where does all the fear and loathing come from?

"It's 'cause I'm a woman! Women are dreadful, the most vengeful creatures. Every woman writer that I like has that element of anger, where they're hurt and they're nasty about it." Halliday's formative influences include the few singer-songwriters who explore female negativity, such as Siouxsie and Patti Smith. So would she like to be a female role model for the next pop generation?

"The thing is, I don't know if I'd be a good role model!" says Halliday, laughing. Dean mutters softly, as if privy to bitter experience, "What an appalling idea."

Curve

how nirvana made it

It's 1992—grunge goes overground and anarchy comes to the charts. Anatomy of a hit by NATHANIEL WICE.

So how did a bunch of underground nobodies suddenly turn into pop superstars? Nirvana's *Nevermind* has reached the top of the pop charts and sold three million albums (and counting). How did the style of the 100,000-strong indie tribe suddenly infect a nation of a quarter billion?

When Nirvana turned in the master tapes of *Nevermind* last summer, the band and its new label, Geffen subsidiary DGC, hoped to match the sales of Sonic Youth's *Goo* (almost 200,000). DGC's 1989 signing of Sonic Youth was a watershed in the process by which the major labels have taken over and expanded alt-rock into a market force.

With its hummable hybrid of metal and alternative, its pop melodies, and the vaguely incoherent, antisocial lyrics, Nirvana's new record was clearly much more polished than *Bleach*, the band's Sub Pop debut. But it was still worlds apart from the likes of U2.

Nirvana's success is obviously not the result of a marketing master plan—Capitol Records spent more on Hammer's TV campaign alone than DGC did on recording and producing *Nevermind*. Romantics might put it all down to artistic genius, but grown-ups know that great albums don't just drop out of the sky into No. 1.

A lot of people subscribe to the SoundScan theory. Last spring, *Billboard*'s chart compilers replaced the old corruption-prone system—which relied on store managers' reports—with SoundScan, a computerized tally of retail sales. SoundScan revealed that marginal genres have much stronger sales than previously thought. Nirvana—and N.W.A, Garth Brooks, and Metallica—wouldn't have come close to No. 1 under the old system. And, of course, the charts don't just report tastes; they also amplify and shape them.

When you watch the slow-mo replay of *Nevermind*'s spontaneous combustion, you see that it's really a chain reaction that started deep in the alternative world and blew outward, eventually reaching Top 40 radio. Each stage ignited because of the overwhelming response to "Smells Like Teen Spirit," but ignition all depended on the newly powerful alternative market. Mark Kates, director of alternative music at DGC, says that "there's never been a time when the indie buzz was so qualitatively important. And we've never had such instantaneous response to everything that we did to market the album."

Word of mouth started immediately. Nirvana's September release party in Seattle was the talk of the L.A. rock world. Alternative radio added "Teen Spirit" on its arrival in late August. On the eve of *Nevermind*'s September 24 release, the band kicked off a major tour. Kates reports a "weird excitement" surrounding these shows, giving much credit to the devotion of the 20-odd large commercial alternative stations across the country. By mid-October, when *Nevermind* was the most-requested album on alternative radio, sales had broken 200,000. In a matter of weeks, Nirvana had effortlessly shot to the top of the alternative world.

On September 30, MTV introduced Nirvana's notorious anarchy cheerleaders as a "World Premiere" on *120 Minutes*. Ironically, the most concentrated, centralized force in pop music is now more adventurous than commercial radio. MTV had helped set the pop stage for an indolent, melodic rock anthem by championing Faith No More's "Epic," but the response to "Teen Spirit" astonished everyone. By Thanksgiving, MTV had accidentally overshadowed its own Michael Jackson hype with a genuine pop phenomenon.

In October, Nirvana caught on with metal fans, who were prepped for Seattle rock by Soundgarden and the alternative retooling of *Headbangers Ball*. *Nevermind*'s metal fans were the bridge between alternative and pop success. In the first week of November, when the band's tour finished, sales stood at an extraordinary 600,000. Even then, album-oriented rock (AOR) radio was nervous about the album's radio-friendliness. On most stations, "Teen Spirit" was considered too noisy for daytime airplay—until audiences forced airplay through request lines. At each step, the song was making instant fans of listeners, who wandered zombie-like into record stores.

Top 40, the last domino to fall, couldn't resist this combined force of music, SoundScan, alternative and metal fans, *and* MTV. In January, Jeff Pollack, the preeminent AOR consultant, got with the new program, telling an AOR convention that the format has to play more alternative bands.

Sub Pop's not bitter about losing the No. 1 band of the year to a rich competitor—they've been saved from near Chapter 11 thanks to back-catalog sales of *Bleach* and the deal Sub Pop cut when Nirvana left for DGC. The label receives royalties—"gets points"—on every copy of *Nevermind* sold.

Though the band's wayward behavior continues unmodified, it remains to be seen what of Nirvana's world will survive as the band gets absorbed into the mainstream. If hip 11-year-olds everywhere know about Dinosaur Jr., Pearl Jam, and the Pixies, what are hip 21-year-olds to do?

PHOTOGRAPH BY GREG WATERMANN; SPECIAL EFFECTS BY VISUAL MIRACLES NYC.

If it isn't a tradition, it's a very, very, very, very long fad.

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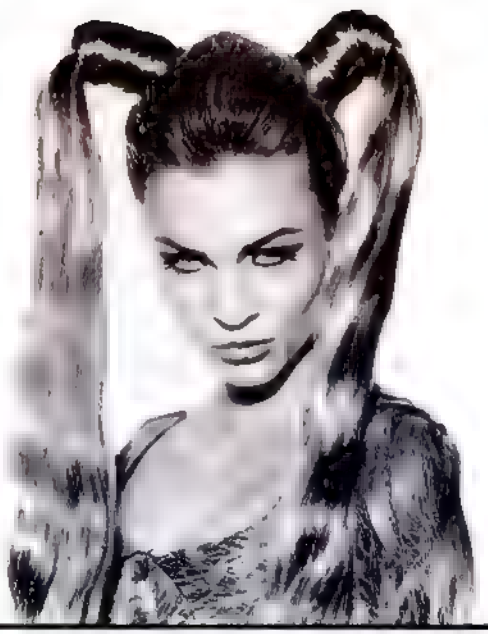

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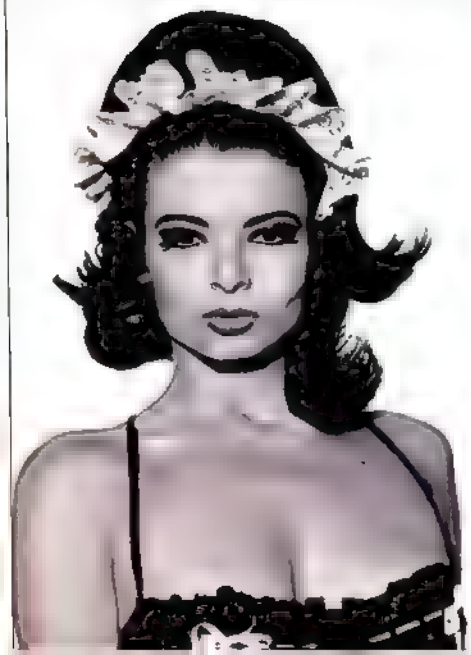


Everybody's playing it, everybody's saying it—even if no one's doing it anymore. What is it with this "I'm Too Sexy" stuff? SPIN puts its tongue in your cheek.

SPIN FASHION

Sex has been scary so long it's easy to forget that it can also be stupid. The current cross-legged climate has been unexpectedly convulsed by an outrage from England, a country where the populace are so pale and lame they tend to lose each other between the sheets. Last summer, the words I'M TOO SEXY became international currency, bouncing from airwaves to T-shirts and embedding themselves in the pan-European lingua franca. Right now, with Right Said Fred's tune a chart smash, these tight-lipped, buttoned-down, eye-averting, censorious United States are knuckling under, powerless to resist the lure of a driving beat, a nutty hook, and a thrusting, shorn-headed six-footer in a fishnet body stocking.

"I'm Too Sexy" was conceived, according to Richard Fairbrass, the voice and bod of the band, "in a postorgasmic trance." Without prior knowledge or intention these former gym managers (responsible for leaving at least one member of Pink Floyd red-faced and gasping) gave birth to a song, phrase, and cringe-making video ("I know it's cheesy," says Fairbrass happily. "It has an earthy cheapness") that rub our

I'm too sexy
for my pussycat

VANGRACK

DRESS CODE

Shoes and Clothes Together.

VANGRACK

FAST AND FRIGHTENING

Hard-rock vixtrels L7 give ALISON POWELL a glimpse of the future.

THE FEAR: L7 WOULD HATE ME ON SIGHT AND WE'D GET INTO A SHOVING match. We'd slash each other with hairbrushes, and the band would threaten me with my own eyelash curler. The reality: *The River's Edge* meets *Pretty in Pink*, and both are shocked to find they get along like gangbusters.

The four women of L7 are human jackhammers and linguistic gymnasts whose first album for Slash Records, *Bricks Are Heavy*, should stretch the band's appeal way beyond hard-rock circles. Produced by Butch "Teen Spirit" Vig, the new record comes on like Blondie holding a belt sander, evincing the kind of lyrical chutzpah ("My diet pill is wearing off!") not seen since the New York Dolls' David Johansen hung up his slingbacks. Much is expected of *Bricks*, but as guitarist-vocalist Suzi Gardner explains, L7's aims remain quite modest. "We're taking our music to the people, and if we get to do some shopping along the way, that's really cool; if we get laid, that's the cherry on the whipped cream."

Kicking off L7's season in the sun, Nirvana bass player Chris Novoselic sported one of the band's T-shirts on *Saturday Night Live*, evidencing a special bond between the two Sub Pop graduates. Not only do they now share a producer, but one member of Band A has swapped saliva with a member of Band B. L7 also saved a special display of affection for Novoselic: "We tied him up like Gulliver, and he just didn't get it," recalls drummer Dee Plakas. When asked about possible hurt feelings, the grungy giant is forgiving: "Those girls are rambunctious, very high-spirited."

Rambunctious or not, L7 is endearingly considerate of those not on its legendary "shit list." Tireless pro-choice activists, the band has organized benefits for the Feminist Majority organization and simply doesn't know where to begin its list of political grievances. L7 knows its audience is not entirely made up of true believers, so the band doesn't mind stopping a song in the middle to tell people to quit the rough stuff, hoping women will feel they can come to the front without getting hurt.

Plakas and guitarist-vocalist Donita Sparks arrive at Slash Records' offices in Los Angeles, recovering from the flu and in urgent need of an expectorant. With only phlegm standing between us, the room is soon filled with the band's X-Large personality. Each member of L7 immediately cops to being a middle-class suburban trawler, each with her own angle: Bass player Jennifer Finch claims she forgot to attend high school for three years, but swears, "The law only came after me a couple of times." In a bid for social acceptance at school, Gardner allowed her clothes to be stolen by wannabe friends. Former White Castle maiden Sparks was "a jock cheerleader who smoked"; and Plakas was the kind who switched price tags at the drugstore. Hey, Color Me Badd!

Initially regarded as a curiosity around Los Angeles when the band formed in 1985, L7 found sympathy in Seattle when its EP, *Smell the Glove*—I mean, *Smell the Magic*—was released by Sub Pop in 1990. "We didn't start out to be an all-girl band. We had a boy drummer at first," says Sparks. But the Pete Best of L7 proved one brick short of a load: "We've been through the wringer with the rhythm section," says Sparks, giving a vague assessment of an obviously touchy subject. The next time around, the band was a little more careful. Recalls Plakas: "They asked me all kinds of questions when I joined the band. How much garlic did I eat a day? Would I ever pee on the floor? Was I a bleeder?" Once her personal hygiene checked out, it was down to a blind taste test; Plakas was just the best drummer they found. At the moment, though, her hacking is the driving beat of the conversation, and I wonder if we might not carry on in an iron lung.

When clashing schedules force us to cancel our outing to a Beverly Hills salon for seaweed body wraps, the gals are devastated. Gardner brightens momentarily: "We could go throw rocks at cars. That's the most fun!" Or, the next best thing: palmistry. I make like Mrs. Partridge in my very square Volvo, driving nervously while the kids sing in the back ("I went to the fortune teller"). At Mrs. Lee's House of Psychic Healing we figure that we have enough cash for "two palms and one tarot." Plakas and Sparks balk: "No thanks. I don't want to know." But Gardner and Finch have questions: "When will I get married? How many children will I have?" Each comes out of her session serene and optimistic. Indicating an as-yet-unvoiced desire for success, both had asked about the band's future. Mrs. Lee knew it all before they opened their mouths. Good news from the seventh dimension, it's going to be a great year.

TRISHA CLUCK

Women on the verge, *clockwise from bottom left*: Suzi Gardner, Donita Sparks, Dee Plakas, and Jennifer Finch.

Drum. Your Own Rhythm.

Surprisingly Mild.

LIVE bait

A spirited young alternative band named Live has made the most of its early tastes of rock stardom. But will too many cooks spoil its heady broth? ALEC FOEGE investigates.

From left: Chad Gracey, Edward Kowalczyk, Patrick Dahlheimer, and Chad Taylor.

DANNY CLINCH

THE AMERICAN ROCK SCENE circa 1991 was fertile ground for a grubby little band named Nirvana. The media machine had plain run out of artificial new. Never mind that Nirvana's hit single, "Smells Like Teen Spirit," is a comment wasted on a culture that ritualistically eats its rebels for breakfast and spits them back up as TV snacks.

At first glance, the jangly, melodic guitar pop of the band Live appears to be a fresh alternative to the usual hype-heavy product, an easy in with music listeners inured to the high-decibel holler of rap, industrial, and heavy metal. Lead singer, lyricist, and guitarist Ed Kowalczyk, 20, imbues Live with much of its passion and character. His phlegmy baritone is not what one expects from the throat of such a young man; it's also unusually adaptable. His lyrics put forth a naive mysticism that, on occasion, translates into inadvertent insight. "Mirror Song," an ode to social conscience in an age of imminent doom from the band's first album, *Mental Jewelry*, asks "What about my bank account / And my holy desert shield / That keep me dry under the arms?"

Kowalczyk, drummer Chad Gracey, lead guitarist Chad Taylor, and bassist Patrick Dahlheimer began playing together in 1985, at ages 13 and 14, in their hometown of York, Pennsylvania, calling themselves Public Affection. Seven years and a high school education later, the four sober young men that comprise Live are clean-cut models of American pulchritude. They also happen to be the luckiest new alternative rock band in the world.

"You're in a situation where somebody's going to offer you a very large sum of money to promote what you do," Taylor explains. "Do you turn it down for the fear that you're going to be slick, or do you do it because that's what you've always wanted to do?" Such was Live's dilemma last year when Radioactive, a label distributed by MCA, offered the band a multialbum recording deal. The dilemma arose again when Talking Heads guitarist Jerry Harrison offered to produce the band's first EP, *Four Songs*, and album, *Mental Jewelry*. It came up once more late last fall, when MTV offered the band a coveted Buzz Bin slot on the network's new music show, *120 Minutes*, and a spot on an MTV tour.

The four sober young men that comprise Live are clean-cut models of American

TAYLOR IS THE BAND'S SPOKESMAN, if only because he talks a lot. With his long bangs and striped rugby shirt, he plays the part of suburbia's favorite son. Kowalczyk, wearing an oxford shirt, a tie, and horn-rimmed glasses, acts and talks more seriously, choosing his words with care. Gracey and Dahlheimer are polite but say little; during the group interview, they seem bored.

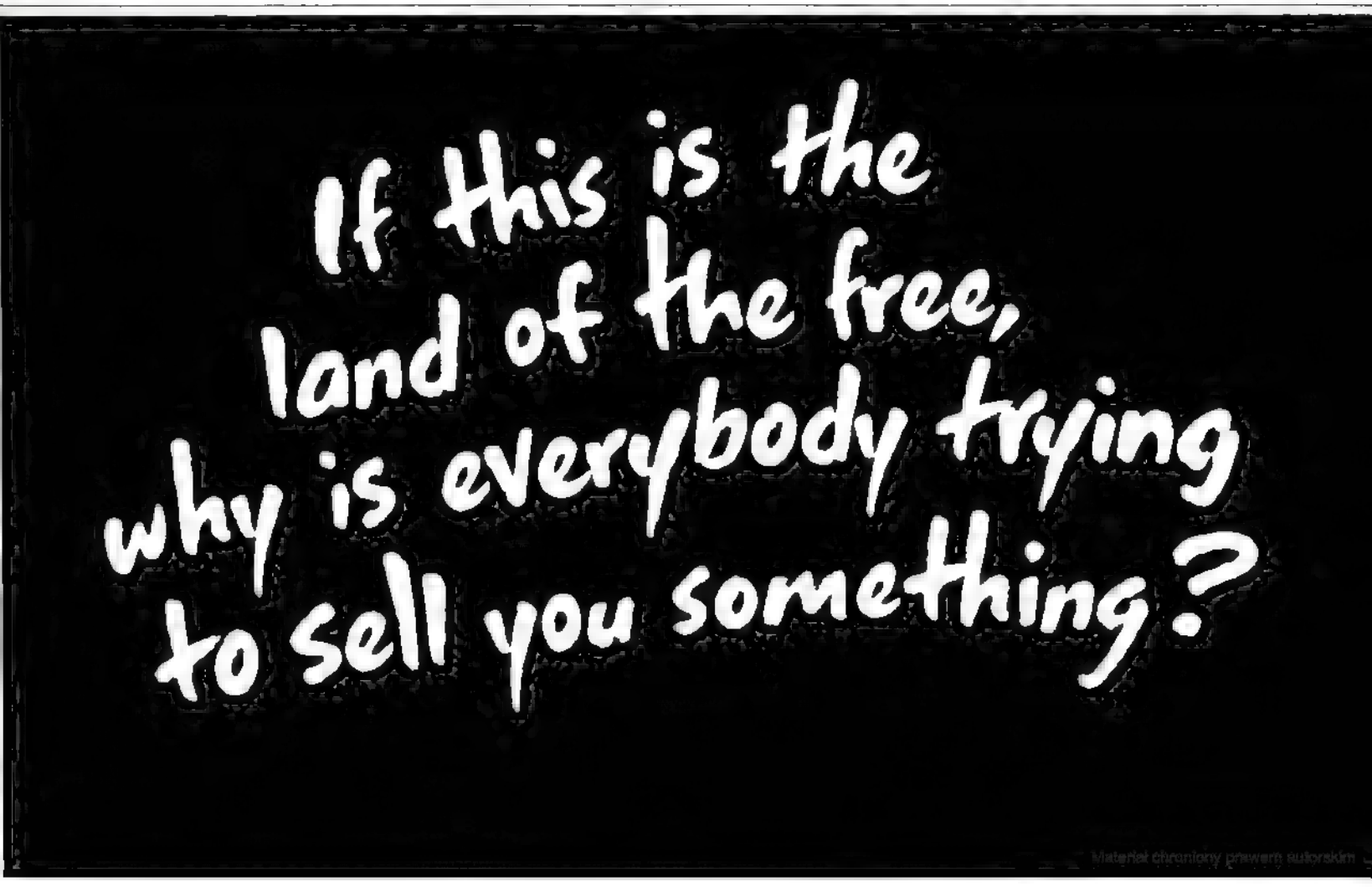
"One of the major things for us is to keep it real," blurts out a disarmingly intense Kowalczyk. "The video's nice, the album's nice—but that's not us." Taylor, the member most likely to traffic in punk dissent, at once becomes riled when pressed for details of the band's recent make-believe show in the lobby of MTV's corporate headquarters: "We're surrounded by record company people—they want to sell records, ultimately. But we don't give a shit about selling records. We're just doing what we're doing." Clearly, Live is set on proving that its initial conquests—a big-name producer, a major-label contract, a heavy-rotation video—were hard-won. At press time, "Operation Spirit (The Tyranny of Tradition)," the single off *Four Songs*, was climbing pop charts across the country. Can anyone fault Live for taking full advantage of media-age opportunities?

Until 1990, Live had played few clubs besides the Chameleon in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, a small city of 60,000 by no means known for its new music scene. In 1989, when they were still known as Public Affection, the band independently recorded and distributed an album titled *The Death of a Dictionary*, financing the project by selling $10,000 worth of bonds. *Dictionary* won the band its first break—an occasional gig at New York's CBGB. Gary Kurfirst, president of Radioactive and ex-manager of the Talking Heads, signed Live on the strength of the band's concerts, plus a five-song demo produced by Jay Healey (R.E.M., Paul Simon). Kurfirst then sent the demo to Jerry Harrison, who has previously manned the mixing board for the Violent Femmes, the BoDeans, and Psychefunkapus, among others.

"A lot of what I did was tightening up arrangements," says Harrison. "It was my idea, for example, on 'Operation Spirit' to take the middle part and introduce the song with that." Harrison compares Live's uncloaked ingenuousness to that of Jonathan Richman and the Modern Lovers, the ironic pop rebels with whom he began his own career. "One of the big differences, though, is that Ed can really sing," he says. "There's an intensity and the songs mean a lot to them, and I think that's refreshing." Harrison had no way of telling, when he first became involved, that Live would so thoroughly hook the industry heavies. "The only thing that was calculated is we did not spend any extra money in making the record on unnecessary things."

LIVE IS A BAND FOR THE '90S. WHEN asked what Live does with its free time on the road, Kowalczyk gives a jolting response. "We play Game Boys," he says. "We don't party at all—we're boring as far as that aspect of it goes." Foremost, he gently explains, the band members consider themselves musicians.

"I don't think we'd work on an independent label because of the type of material we do," says Patrick Dahlheimer. "We're just a little too—accessible." Another reason Live seems ill-equipped for the well-trodden route to indie stardom is the band's distaste for image. When the band members were asked to remove their shirts for the shooting of their first video, they protested. (They later conceded, once convinced they were not being pitched as teen pinups.) "People are, like, 'This MTV involvement is just not cool,' " says Taylor. "But those are the same people that are giving MTV the means to categorize bands. The indie flag-wavers are the people that



Materiał chroniony prawem autorskim

pulchritude. They are also the luckiest new alternative rock band in the world.

DANNY CLINCH

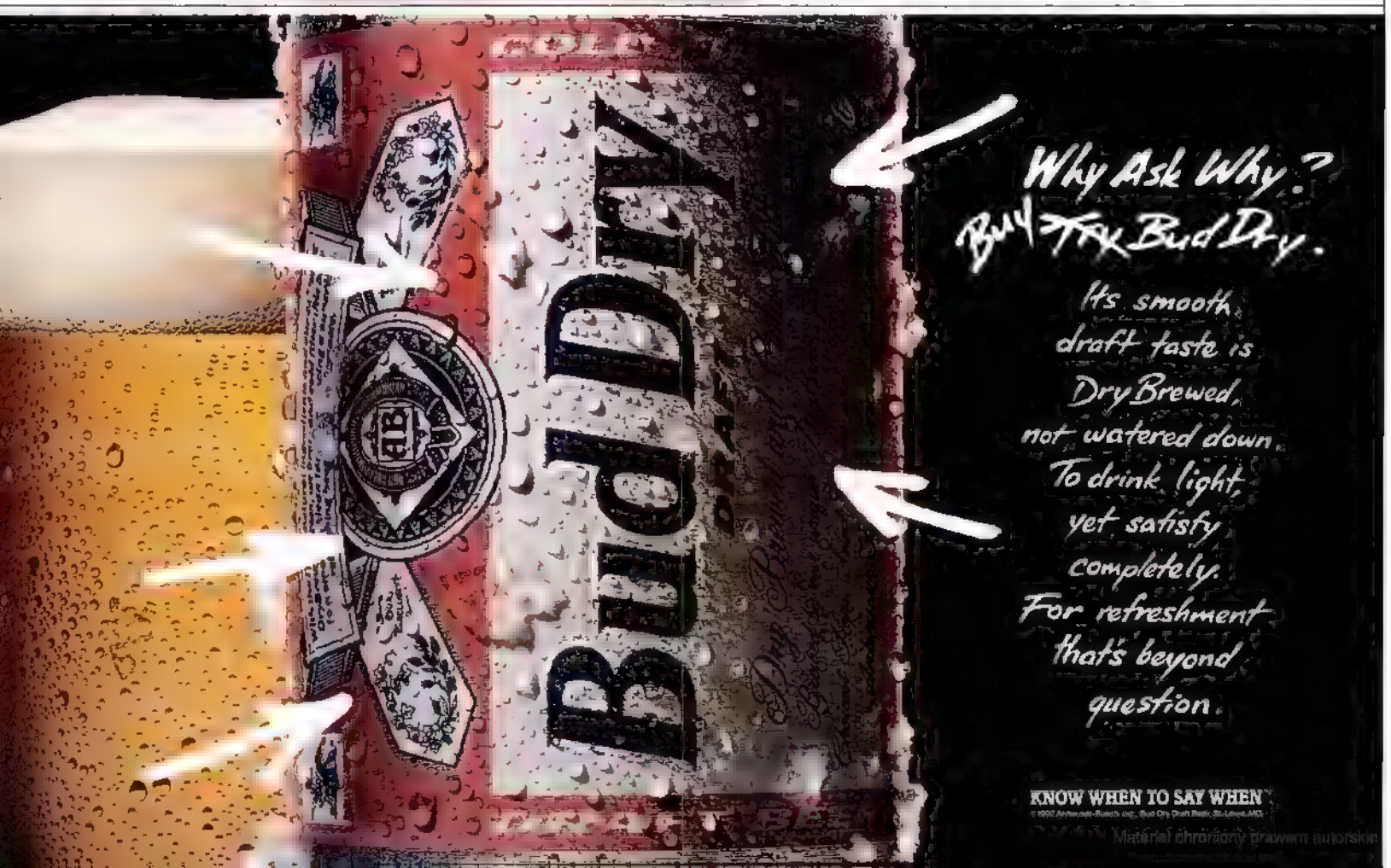
Oh, what a feeling!

are giving MTV significance in a negative sort of way."

For John Cannelli, vice president of music and talent relations at MTV and the man responsible for bringing the video of "Operation Spirit" into millions of cable-friendly homes, Live's accessibility was what first got him excited. "In this case we sort of broke our own rules," says Cannelli, "because Live didn't have an album out at the time we put them on Buzz Bin."

WHETHER OR NOT Live's overt passion and sincerity are to one's taste, it's not difficult to tell the band has retained its essence. The first week in January, *Mental Jewelry* entered *Billboard*'s album chart at 200. Two weeks later, it shot to No. 99. Yet success has apparently not gone to the band's heads. Peter Freedman, who comanages Live, says to this day he has "never seen them bicker." Live has cleared its first set of professional hurdles unscathed.

The history of rock is the history of crass marketing. It's a good thing, though—pop sincerity, more often than not, stinks. From this vantage, however, it's hard to tell whether Live's plainspoken candor will wash in the long run. Regardless, Live's debut ushers in a new era in popular music, an era in which technology is ringmaster of the media circus, and bands—both independent and major-label—are ostensibly clown acts. MTV's Cannelli is more optimistic: "If they're true artists, it doesn't matter what happens around them."


Why Ask Why?
Buy The Bud Dry.
It's smooth draft taste is Dry Brewed, not watered down. To drink light, yet satisfy completely. For refreshment that's beyond question.
KNOW WHEN TO SAY WHEN

POLAROIDS FROM THE DEAD

Generation X author DOUGLAS COUPLAND spent the final week of 1991 in Oakland, California, immersed in the subculture of the Grateful Dead. Here are his ten fiction X-rays.

1. THE 1960s ARE DISNEYLAND

"Are we in the 1960s yet?" asks Cheyenne.

"Hippies smell like booger," says Amy.

Rain is falling on Oakland for the first time in five years. The drought is over. Scott, Amy, Todd, and Cheyenne sit hamstered inside Scott's stepmother's steamy-windowed Lexus, parked atop Spyglass Road, surveying the moistening months-old remains of the Oakland Hills fire storm—hills once bursting with sequoias, Nile lilies, sago palms, and mansions, now all incinerated into a fine oyster-gray dust the color of recycled paper.

"I mean, if the Soviets really wanted to roast the Bay Area," says Todd, "they didn't need a Bomb. A hibachi and a few drunk teenagers would have been way cheaper."

"Whose picture is that on the acid?" calls Cheyenne from the rear seat, mopping a gin spill from her Okie dress and Goodwill cardigan.

"Your mother's."

"Fuck *on*, Scott."

"It's Bart Simpson," says Amy, the in-car substance authority. "Eighty mikes. And avoid the Peace Sign blotter circulating around now because it's totally washout."

A half-hour previously the four friends liaisoned in Walnut Creek at the Broadway Plaza Mall, their tribe-defining shopping nucleus. Afterward, serenaded by a *My Dad Is Dead* CD, they cruised into Oakland via the Highway 24 tunnel through the Berkeley Hills, all four eager to be punctual for Deadhead parking lot action at Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum. Nutty preconcert fun starts at four o'clock.

Todd spots a melted satellite dish down the hill. "Imagine BMXing in this shit. Or using ATVs. Better buy mom some more scratch n wins."

"Wasn't she a hippie?" asks Cheyenne.

"Booger booger booger," chants Amy. "A '60s chick."

"The 1960s . . ." Todd considers that era, as distant and

PHOTOGRAPHS BY LOREN HAYNES

meaningful to his own life as *The Flintstones* or the Civil War—faint images of beehive hairdos, the moonwalk, fat guys with bad haircuts yelling at helicopters. "I don't like the 1960s," Todd then says. "I'd rather be here. Now."

Amy chews apricot leather and scans the cities below down the gray slopes: Oakland, Alameda, Emeryville, Berkeley—and San Francisco across the Bay—birthplaces of the transuranium elements, the 1960s, nouvelle cuisine, and the Intel 586 microchip. Amy sees these cities now slick with water and cottoned in a fine Pacific mist, the ash color of burnt houses. She remembers the day last August when the hills ignited—she inventories her mental images of exploding eucalyptus trees, Siamese cats sizzling inside garages turned kilns, sparrows burning their claws, landing on the stove-element-hot husks of Jeeps—frightened citizens escaping from walls of flame only to drive down the wrong road and into fire storms and molten deaths.

And now the hills are cool and damp.

Amy sees a road sign out the window, but the painted letters have burned off. A few minutes ago, driving uphill, she saw a sign reading THIS WAS ONCE SOMEONE'S HOME. GO AWAY. Well, she thinks, at least at a Dead concert you can forget for a few hours the world is going to go *bang*. You pay your money and you hop on the ride. Fun costumes, tunes as seen on MTV, and afterward you can return to the present.

A cop pounds the window.

"Whoa!" A startled Scott lowers the glass. Apparently the Lexus is parked in a potential mudslide zone; they must drive on. And so they do—down past the now-rusted melted stoves and heating tanks of the ex-mansions, down onto Highway 24 onto Highway 980 which connects to the once quake-pancaked Interstate 880 Nimitz Freeway, then toward the Coliseum parking lot, licking their Bart Simpson acid and dodging jackknifed big-rigs and liquid oxygen spills along the way, and with Scott amusing his friends with tales of his hypothetical career working in the used car lots of Antarctica.

"In the 1960s they had merry pranksters," says Cheyenne. "What do we have now?"

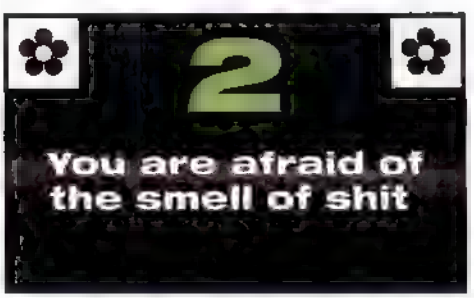
"Wacky funsters," answers Scott.

"Look!" says Amy, rolling down her window amid the entranceway gridlock of VW microbuses, "a Tricia Nixon dress—that's *so* cool."

"History is cool," nods Todd.

Scott, Amy, Todd, and Cheyenne near their concert. Already the scorched hill behind them has been forgotten, as has other news of the day—minor tremblers in Watsonville and Loma Prieta and controversy over the storage of vasectomized nuclear weapons up-Bay in Richmond. But a fraction of the imagery they have seen today will stick. Their thinking, continuing a process which began 15 years ago back in day-care, will become even more fortressed.

Thinks Scott, inching toward the lot, if he, Amy, Todd, and Cheyenne kill enough old people, or if enough old people are killed, or if enough old people simply die, or if the system implodes and they are somehow magically able to afford to build houses of their own, he will design a house for the *real* world. *His* roof will be shingled with slate, not tinderbox cedar, *his* yard will be free of flammable trees-of-death, *his* water will be stored in vast, dark, black tanks buried deep beneath the soil and *his* walls, though stuccoed in bright and amusing colors like bubble gum, lemon, or swimming-pool blue, will be lined with steel.



"Deadheads aren't like Dungeons & Dragons freaks or Trekkies," says Ross, "though there is, of course, some overlap. Don't crush the puppy."

Daniel trips over a bewildered black lab pup, then looks up to see a Grim Reaper–costumed figure headed his way, carrying a basket of oranges. The puppy sniffs Daniel's nose and darts off; Daniel's jeans are soaked from the lakes of water formed by the downpouring of rain. Behind him a waterlogged, gone-to-seed surf dude

in bib overalls and a Guatemalan sweater juggles cartons of soy milk and shouts, "*Doses! Doses!*" Next to him prances a pretty blond girl with dilated pupils, in an anorak and a tie-dyed hippie skirt. She blesses all passersby with waves of her wand—a rainbow-striped stick tipped with glistening frayed silver Mylar filaments.

"God, Ross. The guys here all look like Charles Manson," says Daniel as he rights himself, "and the women all look like Sharon Tate."

"Certain archetypal dramas continue to replay themselves over and over," replies Ross, who plans to major in philosophy. "Want a carob cookie? And where did Tamara and Stacey go?"

This is Daniel's first Grateful Dead concert. Having seen the freaky skeleton video on MTV, Daniel is curious about the Dead, but not curious to the point of drugging, which might affect his GPA and condemn him to a life batter-frying poultry by-products in fast-food restaurants. Ross, in his FUCK THA POLICE T-shirt, is Daniel's old high school buddy from San Rafael, and is thankfully tolerant of Daniel's nerdiness, but Ross can occasionally inflict a graze wound. "*I smell oregano burning. Is Dan nearby?*"

Daniel has heard lore of the pre–Dead concert parking lot scene, but the actuality of the event is overpowering—a dope-smoke–scented anti-mall constructed of crammed-together, beat, rust-bucket trucks, vans, and school buses license-plated mainly from California, Oregon, Washington, British Columbia, Nevada, Colorado, and Arizona. In front of these vehicles, an impromptu tent city of vendors flaunt standard head shop goodies: antler pipes, skeleton decals, skull candles, tie-dyed shirts, porcupine quills, juggling supplies, Peruvian mittens, conspiracy theory paperbacks, rolling papers, and bumper stickers: MUCHAS GARCIAS and ONE NUCLEAR FAMILY CAN RUIN YOUR WHOLE DAY and JUST SAY N_2O TO DRUGS.

Older hippie ladies ripe with BO gorge on condom balloon animals of nitrous oxide; relentless bongo drums beat; troll hippies in plaid flannel shirts vend health food dinners soaked with rain: *Veggie stir-fry! Veggie stir-fry!*

Daniel buys a Styrofoam plate of tofu, hijiki mushrooms, tamari sauce, and Maui onion bits. "With lecithin and engevista yeast," the spacey vendor proudly says. Daniel holds his plate and asks for a plastic spoon. The troll druggily cackles back, "Hey, man, I'm organic."

Daniel abandons the cutlery-free plate on the vendor's counter next to a mandala-painted sea-salt shaker. He then drifts back to home base for the early evening, Ross's five-color 1971 VW microbus, which differs from other nearby buses by the driftwood, bungie cords, and Kurt Vonnegut novels crammed between the dash and the front window, and by a battery-powered space heater glowing from within like a Chernobyl reactor core. A saucily upside-down U.S. flag flaps in the stormy wind above the plastic tarpaulin canopying the VW's sliding doors. Says Ross, "Microbuses are the interlocking paving stones of the new Dark Age."

Before entering the van, Daniel avoids a mound of puppy shit lying under the slightly less wet area covered by the tarpaulin. Once inside he suggests to his schoolmates, all UC Berkeley freshmen like himself, and smoking mystery substances from a bong, that perhaps somebody in the van has trailed inside a dab of the puppy's business.

"Daniel," says Ross, marveling at Daniel's coolness deficiency, "nothing is more bourgeois than fear of the smell of feces. Chill. Swig this." Ross hands Daniel a beer. "Look. There go Tamara and Stacey. Come along, Deadsters."

Farther down the congested and soaking wet medieval midway, Daniel and Ross meet Tamara and Stacey, standing under another tarpaulined space where instant fire logs burn directly on the tar surface of the parking lot. "Greetings, Deadlets," says Ross. "Love the wimple, Stace."

Stacey pats her wimple—her pointy purple velvet Maid Marian hat. "Thanks Ross." She attempts lighting small cones of wisteria- and lotus-scented incense to cover the petroleum reek of burning tar.

"What music are they drumming?" Daniel asks the group.

"Kwakiutl and Haida chants," says Tamara, burrowing into her fanny-pack full of pinecones and polished moonstones for a sugar cube, which she finds, then swallows. "Isn't it great?" She offers a cube to Daniel, who awkwardly declines.

The Econoline van next to the fire hosts a 24-inch Hitachi monitor displaying a never-ending spiral of vibrant Mandelbrot fractal patterns. Daniel hears a helium-squeak voice shopping for Ecstasy. Nearby dogs (so many dogs here!) gobble discarded grilled cheese sandwiches and sniff each others' bums, remembering each other from Dead shows in Meadowlands, Nassau, and Shoreline.

Emerson and Dale—friends of Ross's—discuss the evening's possible line-up of Dead songs with a curatorial facility Daniel had considered to be held only by his mother's wine bore boyfriends. "No, *no*. They opened the second set of the first 1989 Spectrum show in Philadelphia with 'China Cat Sunflower,' not 'One More Saturday Night.' "

Stacey, thrilled to be moist, stands outside the tarpaulin and stares at the darkening sky and the rain along with a clique of other kids clad in Glad bags, fringed buckskin coats, Aztec ponchos, Cowichan sweaters, and blond dreadlocks tucked within toques and rasta hair cozies. "I feel like one of those '60s photographs," she says. "Are we going inside soon?"

"Right now," says Ross. "Dead ho! That means you, too, Daniel. Having fun?"

Daniel, Ross, Tamara, Stacey, Emerson, Dale, and others in their group enter the damp and snaking throng of lineup into the coliseum. How young the crowd looks, Daniel thinks, why there's almost nobody over 22 in the entire parking lot. This thought surprises Daniel, because he had always thought the Dead were for clapped-out old hippies and bikers. He mentions this abundance of youth to Ross, who replies by saying, "Look at those two old coots there."

"Where?"

"The fiftysomethings over by the pylons. Man, they must be doing pretty wild stuff over there. Look how into it they are. I'm curious—I'm gonna go check what they're doing."

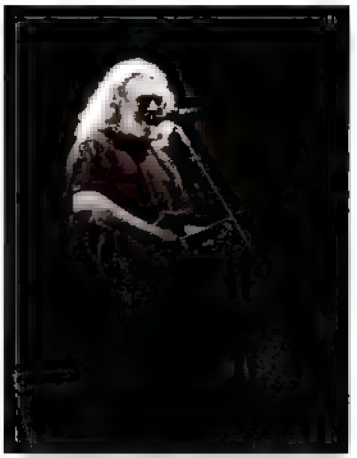
Ross scampers over to the two older, bearded men—1960s survivors indulging in a small, manually complicated ritual—and asks a question or two, then scampers back to his friends in line. Asks Tamara, "What were they doing?"

Replies Ross, disgusted, "Contact lenses."

"Hitlerberries."

"Huh?"

"Hitlerberries." Caroline plucks a frilled strawberry bull from a ripe berry, depositing it



The photographs on these pages were taken on December 30, 1991, on a dry day at Oakland Coliseum, the sight of a Grateful Dead concert.

into her backpack. She then eats the berry part. "Ever notice how there aren't any deformed strawberries these days? Remember how there used to be deformed—*weak*—berries hidden in the bottoms of the baskets? Now they're all perfect. Boring. Flavorless."

Mario only half pays attention. He is hypnotized by a new tattoo of a sun on Caroline's left calf. This is a tattoo garnered not 30 minutes previously in the parking lot, in the rear of a gutted, Oregon-plated Chevy station wagon latex-painted with violet Jolly Roger skull and crossbones.

Caroline and Mario are seated 14 rows up, directly opposite the stage—choice seats—waiting for the show to begin and watching oval pink balloons the size of pigs being batted about by the audience. They inhale from the Coliseum's syrupy microclimate. This is sweet druggy air which only two months ago Caroline might have feared was a breeding ground for multidrug-resistant tuberculosis, but this is air which she now positively vacuums in with abandon, enthralled to catch a wave of patchouli oil or vegetarian sweat, the air humid from so much evaporating clothing.

Caroline's hair is woven into thin cornrows—the proto-dreadlock phase—and she breezily informed Mario just prior to her tattooing that she had skipped a period. When they connected three months ago, *he* was the cooler member of the relationship.

"And for that matter," Caroline continues, back on her theme of strawberries and eugenics, "there aren't deformed babies born anymore. Ever notice? All aborted, I guess. Imagine a world without midgets. Do you ever worry about biotechnology?"

"Uh—" Mario stalls. He doesn't understand half of what Caroline says these days. Somewhere, about two weeks back, Mario guesses, they crossed the point where it had been mutually assumed *he* was smarter, or rather, *Caroline* stopped pretending any longer that he was. Maybe it was the exam hell or maybe it was the mescaline. Caroline's current looseness is shocking compared to her previous uptight self, when she was like one of those ladies in cherry blazers who work behind the airline counters. It is as though she is exhausted by the future, by options. Exhausted by risk. Yesterday she threw away all her makeup.

"Life is so serious," Caroline told Mario when they first met at Katie's garage sale. "One screwup and you're doomed," and, "I honestly think the world is a harsher place now than when my mother was a hippie back in the '60s. The stakes are so unimaginable now." Her uptightness had made her seem vulnerable—attractive.

Mario interrupts Caroline. "I like your tattoo."

Caroline, seemingly having already forgotten her new marking, looks at her calf. "Oh yeah. Skin. Sometimes I wish I was a skeleton. No skin. So I didn't have to feel like an object."

Well. So much for chitchat, thinks Mario. They lean back and absorb the crowd scene and listen to drum noises. Mario caresses the limp crown of American Beauty roses woven around Caroline's skull. He goes to the bathroom and scores four tabs of 100-microgram acid from a Santa Barbara skater dude, three dollars apiece. On the blotter paper are images of open windows.

Returning to his seat, Caroline resumes her discussion about science.

"Aw, Caroline," pleads Mario, "the show's gonna start in a second. Can we discuss stuff later?"

"No, Mario, this is important. Don't you ever wonder about the way the world is going? This weird global McNugget culture we live in? All our ideas and objects and activities being made of fake materials ground up and reshaped into precisely measurable units entered into some rich white guy's software spreadsheet program?"

Mario stares blankly at Caroline.

"I'm not going to shave my armpits anymore, Mario. Look at us. Long hair, but it's squeaky clean. Bare feet, sure, but your dad's Prelude is waiting for us outside. It's so hypocritical."

"Your life, baby."

The band comes onstage and the crowd roars. Mario hands Caroline two tabs. "Cheer up, baby. Come on. Embrace the meltdown." Then, pleased with himself for catching the drift of her lecture, he adds, "We're the McDead."

"Yes," says Caroline, placing the open windows inside her body, "we're the McDead."

Fetus and the "Phoenician Phoenician" are purchasing orange drink from a concession stand.

"It's not a universe," shouts the Phoenician Phoenician above the blare of tunage flowing in from the concert. "It's a *multi*verse."

"Wow, man," mumbles Fetus, groggily, his white goatee dipping into his drink.

The Phoenician Phoenician, a.k.a. Dennis, is a free-lance data entry worker from Mill Valley, born in Phoenix, Arizona, and informed by a long-departed girlfriend, Rhianna, he was once a healer in ancient Phoenicia.

Fetus is Carl, so named for his tendency to regress while on drugs.

As the two friends have been following the Dead for two decades, neither is edgy at the thought of missing a few minutes of show. Besides, Dennis wants to start his Yueh-Ling twirl dancing now, and Fetus, well, Fetus just wants to go get fetal with the waste cases in the seats out behind the stage.

"Later, bro," says Fetus, backing away from Dennis, flashing a peace sign. Fetus then stumbles over a plump baby crawling after a blue Citibank balloon, causing Fetus to slop his orange drink. He regains his balance, smiles with relief, flashes a peace sign at the baby's mother, then backs, *boing*, into a Deadhead in a Eureka Loggers football T-shirt using a Pacific Bell booth, causing Fetus's orange drink to fall splat onto the cement of the concourse.

"Oh, wow—" he editorializes, "gravity works." And he is off into the arena.

Dennis laughs. Fetus is so—*human*, he thinks with a slight note of reprobation. Dennis wishes Fetus would work on himself more. Dennis believes that he, himself, is 99 percent *there*. He has the rest of his life to polish up the remaining 1 percent—toddle off to Big Sur, check out the sunrises in Solano County, learn Dolphin.

"Shoes off!" Dennis says to himself, and hurls away the shackles of corporate domination. To the pulse of the music, and along with hundreds of other spinning dancers in the corridors, Dennis commences freedom dancing, his mouse-brown dreadlocks atwirl, red cotton drawstring pants and elfin red beard flowing with the guitars and drumspace of the Dead, all the while avoiding occasional blots of lentil-enhanced barf and foil sprinklings of pixie dust.

During the next song break Dennis gulps his orange drink. A young Deadhead asks him if he can score a dose. "If you have to ask to buy it, then you won't be able to deal with it," Dennis replies with what he hopes is gravity.

"Cry into your dime bag, you hippie weed," replies the youngster.

Really. These kids. Shows weren't always like this, Dennis thinks, vaguely angry and perplexed as he resumes his spinning dance routine. Dead shows were the same as always until, *kablooey*, the MTV video happened and all the kiddies began showing up, eager to party, not appreciating the true Dead spirit. *Some* of the new kiddies don't even bother participating in the complex, rule-packed ritual of mailing away for concert tickets, instead, showing up only for a groove in the parking lot.

Well, at least Dennis has an audience. At least he can transmit the Yueh Ling organic dance lore on to a new generation of twirlers and spinners—a master passing his craft to new generations. He can become—*wait*—over by the T-shirt booth—that tender young Deadling in the prairie dress. Is she, or is she not mimicking Dennis's dance moves? Why she could become Dennis's new—*disciple*. Yes.

5
Tinkering with oblivion carries risks

Doyle, clad in haphazard layers of long johns, gym pants, second-hand sweaters, ribbed work socks, and boots, lumbers through the fluorescent lit spinning mob in the hallways. *Fake Deadheads*, he thinks. *Fake Deadheads*. He wishes they would all spontaneously combust.

Head hunched under his brown felt fedora, Doyle scowls at the youngsters. His head jitters back and forth, continually on the alert for either Masonic imagery or a glimpse of Thomas Pynchon. He wonders if one of these kids would enjoy sifting through a leaflet promoting the denazification of Humboldt County.

These foolish modern TV kids, asleep in a galaxy of pornographic beer commercials and antidrug hysteria. They think their own personal choice of obliteration defines them as individuals—what brand of beer they piss; what species of toad they lick. But they are wrong. *Obliteration* will define *them*, and not the other way around. These kids wouldn't know a bad trip if it shat on them. Freight trains bleeding dead birds; Kodiak bears dipping live dolphins and their own paws into a McDonald's deep fryer; celestial imagery feeding on itself; diarrhea like a steel pipe impaled into their rectums.

Doyle tramps down the rampways, onto the floor, out to the standing worms of microphones being held aloft by Dead fans taping the evening's show. *Fools*, thinks Doyle, *fools*. Even his own peers don't recognize the fragility of the Dead scene. Cops are videotaping the parking lots; skull stickers are probable cause for vehicle inspection in New Jersey; tour rats feed acid to puppies; Dead women squat to pee on park lawns.

Doyle's reverie is snapped when an Oakland Coliseum staff person tells him to either keep moving or stay within the white crowd control lines.

"*Fascists*," mutters Doyle, "*fascists*."

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Diana is in Oakland from Hawaii where she lives, developing real estate on the Big Island. Tonight's concert's intermission is nearly over, and Diana has returned to the arena floor after checking on her two children, Jesse and Hope, down in the nursery,ensuring their foam earplugs were fully taped in place and the vibes good. Cody, Diana's husband, is up in the stands chatting with Keith about the DEA's heat-seeking radar copters being deployed in Siskiyou County to ferret out dope plantations. Keith's okay as long as he keeps on the lithium carbonate. All in all the night has been fine.

Tonight Diana feels sexy in her black Neiman Marcus cocktail dress offset with ostrich-skin cowboy boots and a Zuni leather pouch stuffed with runes and quartz crystals around her neck. Diana feels older, too, much older than the young children who vastly outnumber her at the concert. She feels both a wave of affection for these Junior Deads, and yet sorry for them. Diana feels useful truths have been abandoned over the past years. Young people aren't being taught the right words to even ask the right questions.

Diana is happy the girls are going without makeup and bras, though. The world is about women being beautiful; the world is about people being people. Diana likes the idea of her fuzzy armpits above her strapless dress shocking some of the younger boys at the show, suburban mall boys who didn't even know women sprouted hairs there. She likes the idea of her body being 100 percent owned by herself, like real estate. It worries Diana how naively people surrender ownership of their bodies to others—spouses, the state, the church—all the while thinking they have control over their flesh. Chtorectomy, bride burning, circumcision, veils, GI haircuts, reproductive technologies. . . . Biology under siege—so many people willing and eager to tell you what to do with your body, what you should feel shameful about. Anorexia, bulimia, Nautilized muscles, Barbie dolls, and the application of Nair. The list is endless.

Even the ownership of minds is tenuous nowadays, Diana thinks. Two days ago in Hawaii, Jesse was simultaneously playing Tetris, watching *Doogie Howser*, humming a rap song, and talking to Sidney next door on his Madonna concert/McDonald's french fry headset while kicking Hope in the shins. He was a living computer screen with multiple windows open—information flowing and channeling so effortlessly. The incident made Diana wonder if people are reverting back to the soundless communication state of animals, speaking a new language of pie charts, mouse clicks, and bar codes.

Cody returns just as the music starts and a tab of acid kicks in with a colorful, sparkling wash. "Feeling good, honey?"

"Like Las *Vegas*."

The lights dim; the crowd roars. Diana imagines a helicopter landing in her front yard, the blades blasting away plastic Fisher-Price toys on the grass. She imagines Hawaii state troopers stepping out and warning her of lava oozing down the slope toward her house from the lava lake high up the mountain. Then she sees the lava itself, not a baseball-throw away, its blackened-marshmallow crusty slime encircling a plumeria tree, the tree sap sizzling like beef juice on a barbecue grill.

Diana watches fingers of the lava approach her house, nudging around the redwood siding, bending the aluminum laundry room door, breaking the door down, filling up the kitchen, making tins of pineapple and jars of preserved cherries burst and cook, making scalding hot water explode from the showers and boil in the toilets.

Diana watches cars and satellite dishes be carried down the slope. She follows the lava stream down to the ocean, black crackling mayonnaise, the surface popping and burping like—like—Polaroid flashbulbs, Bic lighters popping at a concert.

Then the lava hits the turquoise ocean water, crumbling in shock as it hardens, disintegrating, forming a new beach of black warm sand—a beach that Diana owns and over which she runs.

It is a beach that exists in a place no beach ought to be; wave patterns will soon sweep the black sand away. It is a beach that, after being washed away in the night, will never be walked on again.

Speck was initially attracted to Florida because the state is shaped like a handgun. That was four years ago. Then he drifted. He worked as a diet cop for a TV talk-show host in Texas. He learned how to fix air conditioners in Arizona but thought he'd develop mental illness from the tedium. After Arizona he drifted up to his hometown of Dearborn, Michigan, the Silicon Valley of 1947, but winter cold reminded him why he split.

Now pit-stopped in Berkeley, Speck has hooked up with a North California spinster he met, mundanely, in the produce section of Andronico's, Alice: fortyish, heiress to a Stockton rice-growing dynasty and of the same pinafore-wearing mold as Miss Jane Hathaway from *The Beverly Hillbillies*. Alice bought him a set of barbells and a red phone shaped like a Porsche; Speck sleeps in his own room downstairs and, once a week, in hers.

Tonight Speck is at a Grateful Dead concert, having jonesed himself a miracle ticket in the parking lot. Alice thinks he is at his AA meeting, a group she refers to obliquely as "the Temperance League." Alice herself is off at a university-sponsored literary do. Speck doesn't pay too close attention to Alice; she is easily fooled, so square. He almost wishes she would surprise him more. Speck tries, however, not to be gratuitously cruel with Alice; between them exists a pleasing silence—as though Alice has mailed Speck a letter and doesn't want to waste words talking until the letter arrives and he has read it. Speck is curious. Besides, her shingled Arts and Crafts house on Hearst Avenue is too comfortable. And he will *not* steal the tiny Miró in the living room.

Rinsing a film of concert dope smoke from his face just into the second set, Speck can see under the coliseum's harsh bathroom lighting that his looks are fading quickly. Rather, the bloom is off. Today is his 25th birthday. His freshness is being replaced with hardness. Speck, a tough critic of bodies, can see his tightening facial structure making him now appear sullen, possibly oversexed, worst of all, possessing a *past*. Speck figures that although he'll still be able to coast on his appearance, the calculated boyish insouciance that carried him to twenty-five is no longer viable.

Earlier on that same day, Alice took Speck for a birthday lunch at Chez Panisse on Shattuck Avenue ("The Cheese Penis"—the dirtiest words Alice has ever spoken in public; Speck, hard to shock, was shocked). Present for the meal were two of Alice's 300-IQ friends in heavy sweaters,

Dorothea and Laraine. Main subjects of conversation were the separation of church and state ("Sunday shopping—is that *it*?" asked Alice) and changes in the global weather patterns.

Alice, Dorothea, and Laraine seemed to enjoy Speck's comments and he was glad to be appreciated for his mind. He mentioned how the world seems to be running out of animals about the same time the auto industry is running out of animals after which to name new cars. He mentioned the places he thought would be the worst place to live in the event of a petro-collapse (Honolulu, New England, the Canadian Maritimes) and the worst place to live in the event of an electro-collapse (the Sun Belt—all those air conditioners) and the worst place to live when the weather collapses completely (just about anywhere except the Pacific Northwest).

Dorothea and Laraine tried to stroke Speck's ego—make him feel more dangerous—feed Alice's rough trade fantasy. Speck loved the attention. He informed the table of his custom license plate idea for the Miata Alice has promised: his blood type, *O, Rh-neg*, "so when I crash, the paramedics won't lose any time." Dorothea and Laraine's mock shock made Alice blush gratifyingly. Or maybe their giddiness was a result of ions in the air from the rain. Such a rainy day.

Tonight, roaming the bleary, enthused mob of the Grateful Dead concert, Speck is glad to be in a hip place with hipper people. He seeks out what he has come to find: a blonde Samoyed-eyed 17-year-old nubeling in need of spiritual guidance and a post-concert escort to the BART station.

These Dead shows. They used to be a drag when he attended them in his teens—Hell's Angels and scraggy hippies. But recently, with the invasion of the MTV kids, concerts are more like those Woodstock photos—peace, love and understanding—except everybody's had a bath. So many lovely young things.

Speck could do without all the skeletons, though, skeletons on T-shirts, stickers, hats, and jewelry. Skeletons remind him of a set of Huron Indian bones wired together in a waiting room he inhabited for endless hours as a child while his father cleaned a medical-dental building in Ypsilanti. And because Speck won't do chemical drugs, owing to their unpredictable effects, he can't figure out what the big druggie attraction is for bones.

Maybe an understanding of the Deadhead obsession with skeletons would help Speck connect with the evening's abundant clear-skinned young girls—girls for whom sex hasn't yet been converted into mechanical, nonprocreative collisions. He needs help; for whatever reason, a connection isn't happening tonight. Perhaps after witnessing his aging face in the mirror, Speck feels psyched-out and is convinced he is transmitting bad vibes. He must seem so *used up* to these girls with their fuzz-cheeked boytoys. He must seem terrifying to them in the same way the stray wizened hippie survivors who punctuate tonight's concert seem scary to him—or even worse, scary like those gristly, leathery bachelors and stewardesses Speck sees in the gyms and the straight bars—the straw-permed sex androids from Planet 1971 Marina del Rey, where the postcoital omelettes and mushroom soup stopped a decade ago—*ancient*—feeding themselves margaritas with IVs, smoking menthol cigarettes through neck tubes, and colostomically purging themselves of salad bar.

Speck decides to pack in the nubes for the night. He strolls onto the floor, out past the annoying spinners ("Hey buddy—it's all fun and games until someone loses an eye"), down the side aisles, and then he sees her, gyrating in her pinafore and singing with her eyes closed, a rope of pearls clacking sideways—Alice.

He freezes; he doesn't say hello. He races out to the parking lot, fetches his pickup and speeds up the drenched 880 to Berkeley, to the university off-ramp and up the hill to the house on Hearst.

There, he enters his downstairs room, appreciating the silence, deriving extra pleasure from knowing the concert continues at that very moment.

He sits on his bed. Alice has lit a large rainbow-layered candle, and it awaits him there on his Shaker side table. "You wingy California chick," he says.

Rain falls on the panes of his window. He can hear himself breathing. He notices the enormity of a grandfather sugar pine outside for the first time. He walks across the room, straightens out his barbells, then returns to his bed. He leans over his side table and warms his hands over Alice's candle. He thinks he will stay here a while.

continued on page 101

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ANTIHERO So you don't want to get fooled again? Here's what we should be looking for in the 1992 campaign for the U.S. presidency, the issues the candidates need to address for young America. An editorial by MICHAEL PAKENHAM.

Has anybody heard a politician so far this year address a serious concern of anybody under the age of coupon-clipping? Well, Frank Zappa—if you insist on calling him a politician. But otherwise?

It's not for no reason that young voters haven't been turning out in anything like the numbers that paunchy and punched-out Americans do, who don't turn out much either. Overall, American voters in 1988 managed the lowest proportion of turnout to scratch a ballot since number-counting began.

"Lead us and we shall follow," a lot of SPIN readers seem to be saying—in forums and letters and conversations. And the politicians seem to be staring back, right over their shoulders, saying, "Laydees and gennelmun, I offer you a Grand Strategy to ensure the rising of Our Glorious Sun in the eastern sky each morning forevermore, and its peaceful descent to rest each evening, and to eradicate all manner of institutional anxiety, including colostomy sticker-shock."

To which any sentient human creature under the age of Winnebago Heaven rightfully says, "Getouddamyface."

Pollable loyalty to President Bush—or *any* of his Democratic challengers for that matter—was so shallow at press time that political surveys were swinging off the turntable. Unless Jim Morrison comes back from Africa with a newfound public-policy eloquence and a shiny, fresh political education, it seems parlously unlikely that among young American voters that volatility will change much before Election Day. So the race could very well go to anybody in the national mainstream who can switch on America's Most Precious Resource.

The politicians keep saying that's *you*. Young people. SPIN readers. Every one of you can and must speak for hum-, her-, or itself. Here's where SPIN feels that attention focus should begin:

Jobs The long- and short-term promise. Deal with a raggedy-bottomed national economic structure in such a way as to make the future more inviting to young Americans than a cold dip in the bay. While they're at it, rein in megagreed at the top, acknowledging this generation has been put in hock by its parents and the pols they picked. On that, the only thing that can *possibly* be said in Bush's and Reagan's defense is that the Dems have been their partners all along.

Environment A coherent commitment to cease the throwaway-mentality despoliation of the entire planet.

The Alienated A huge number of Americans, a lot of them young and very young, are outcasts of the system, and righteously mad as hell about it. Listen to Public Enemy. To Metallica, Nirvana, Ice Cube. And M.C. Lyte. The system must be rebuilt to embrace these disenfranchised Americans, to deal with their very real problems.

Education The cost of college, not to mention graduate school, is obscene and crippling. And in cities anyway public lower-level education hangs between miserable and brain-dead. Improve teachers' lots, including their resources, and improve teaching.

Abortion and all the self-determination that issue relates to: Is a Master State going to try to revert to controlling individual bodies and what their possessors do with them? That doesn't work—so, pols, face up to making sense, not hypocrisy, on abortion and other sex-related issues. Coherence, not coat hangers.

Racism Everyone left of David Duke condemns it, but it goes on festering, with nothing but platitudes coming from the White House or the challengers.

AIDS Get a national policy, based on scientific truth, not myth, including facing that sex exists before middle age and marriage.

Health Care The U.S. spends more on it than any other country on earth in history, and still millions are without medical attention. Curb obscene costs, make decent universal care available and accessible.

Drugs They hurt people. But the U.S. government is faking it. Education, rehabilitation, prevention must be the foundation of any sane drug program. Get real.

Death Penalty It's medieval and doesn't do a damn thing to reduce crime. Face that reality, and face the blood-lust down.

War, Peace, and World Politics Communism is as dead as last summer's flounder. Great, but that leaves umpteen-zillion megatons of nuclear destructiveness rattling around. And the potential of worldwide regional warfare for a generation. Get a global act together. Finally. The U.S. just can't seem to kick the war habit. Peace, baby, peace.

Leadership Tell us something from the heart, something we can believe. And then watch the action, lest you get trampled in it.

There is more than half a year to go before Americans choose their next President. Just about one-quarter of the citizens eligible to make that choice are 29 years old or younger. And, so far, sounds like nobody's talking to them.

SPIN will do its best to listen for the right noises. And report on that campaign, every month, right up till the election, in a special column, "On the Record." ◆

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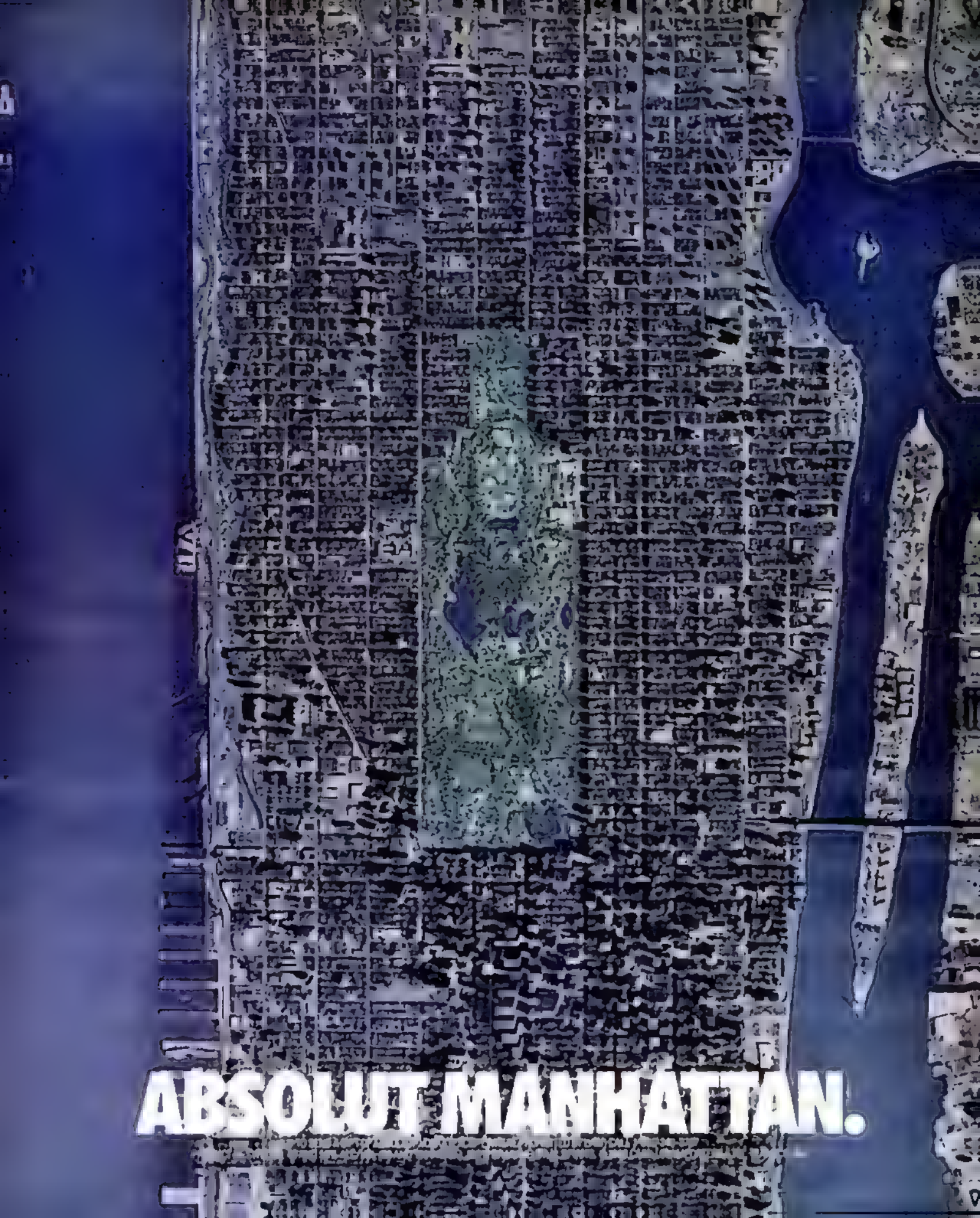
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AIDS

WORDS FROM THE FRONT

A new study reports that acyclovir, a drug used for herpes, doubles the survival time of people with AIDS. CELIA FARBER reports.

Chickens Come Home to Roost

AN INTERNATIONAL STUDY ABOUT TO BE PUBLISHED IS CAUSING A GREAT commotion in the AIDS community. The study, which shows that AIDS patients on a drug called acyclovir lived *twice as long* as those who were not on it, brought about two stunning revelations. One, according to Dr. Michael Youle of St. Stephen's Hospital in London, one of the principal investigators, the drug was effective because of its suppression of a virus other than HIV—a herpes virus called cytomegalovirus (CMV), which is suppressed by the drug. Two, many people in the study were also taking AZT—the drug widely touted as prolonging the lives of AIDS patients—and the benefit of acyclovir was there regardless of whether or not patients took AZT. And yet Dr. Anthony Fauci, head of the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), perhaps the U.S.'s most influential AIDS figurehead, has dismissed the data, citing as reasoning that he feels it's premature. Acyclovir, marketed under the trade name Zovirax, is a relatively nontoxic drug that is active against viruses of the herpes family including herpes simplex 1 and 2, herpes zoster, Epstein-Barr virus (EBV), and CMV. The drug is owned by Burroughs Wellcome, which also owns the dinosaur of AIDS drugs, AZT. But curiously, Wellcome has also tried to dismiss the results of the study and dampen the excitement.

Wellcome insists that the study was meant to test whether acyclovir works as a preventive for CMV disease (which Wellcome says remains inconclusive) and that nothing should be extrapolated with regard to AIDS survival in general. It looks like Wellcome is throwing out the baby to save the bathwater; rather than take the good news about acyclovir along with the tepid news about AZT, it is turning its back on the whole thing.

A wild guess as to the source of Wellcome's displeasure: It has one priority—AZT, for everyone, forever—and this study may be a nail in the coffin for the drug. Why support a study that could jeopardize a highly profitable drug that is already entrenched in and accepted by the medical establishment? Although not conclusive, this British study is still the largest yet of its kind, and very convincing. And as for Fauci—well, the study also shifts the focus of AIDS away from HIV and on to other possible culprits, and Fauci has stated uncategorically in the past that he "doesn't want to talk about cofactors."

DR. JOSEPH SONNEBEND DOESN'T know whether to laugh or cry. For over ten years, since he saw the first trickle of AIDS patients at his New York City practice, he has been talking about the importance of the virus CMV. Virtually all his early patients, and subsequent ones, have been massively infected with it. In fact, before HIV was declared the cause of AIDS, Sonnabend and a few fellow researchers were thinking of calling the new disease "modified CMV disease."

They didn't believe CMV was causing AIDS by itself, but they thought it was certainly a leading contender in the search for a culprit. It infected far more cells than HIV. HIV was hardly detectable; CMV was everywhere.

That HIV emerged as the incontestable and single cause of the syndrome is baffling, considering that at least a few other viruses, CMV being the main one, fulfilled all the disease-causing specifications that HIV did—sometimes more. HIV was said to be the causative agent because it killed T-cells in the test tube and because *most* (but not all) AIDS patients had antibodies to it.

But this holds true for CMV and a few other viruses, as well. "The fact

continued on page 100

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SPIN04

MOVING IMAGES

Animated anarchists Ren and Stimpy are destroying the minds of America every Sunday morning. JOHAN KUGELBERG chokes on his Wheaties.

DARK SIDE OF THE 'TOON

Ren is a megalomaniacal paranoiac. Stimpy is overweight, gullible, and credulous. In his powerful, disturbing, and confrontational examination of tortured psyches, David Mamet shows us—nah, just kidding. Dog and cat duo, Ren and Stimpy, are animated anarchy; an eye-popping, jaw-dropping carnival of a cartoon, which, with one bound, has saved the beleaguered genre from the clumsy smudges of *Hammerman* and countless extended merchandising commercials. The classic double act: Ren, the dog, is a mean Martin to the loyal Lewis of Stimpy, the cat—a Hardy to his Laurel. Ren would sell a bridge, Stimpy would buy it. The moment Nickelodeon began broadcasting *Ren & Stimpy*, the jungle telegraph began flushing pink with exhilaration as anally fixated adolescent males of all ages and sexes found themselves sniggering over a new source of dumb and dirty "in" jokes. With the series currently screening weekends on MTV to overwhelming response, the pair's progenitor, John Kricfalusi, is achieving job satisfaction. "The cartoon seems to be addicting," he comments. "Kids and adults watch the episodes over and over again. I think we are destroying the minds of America, and that's been one of my lifelong ambitions."

Ren & Stimpy is lavishly put together in a style recalling and transcending the low-brow greats of '50s and '60s commercial and cartoon art. The visuals are as beautiful as Ed "Big Daddy" Roth's hot rods, Bill Ward's girlie-mag illustrations, or the Jetsons' furniture. The show's microscopic attention to detail and blink-and-you'll-miss-it pacing requires repeated both-brain-cell viewing.

Ren and Stimpy share a tender moment.

R&S plots and gags may be the most twisted and iconoclastic in cartoon history. Kids (and some of us unevolved types) know that true comedy is intimately connected with the outrageous. Ren and Stimpy go beyond your basest expectations: Stimpy eats his kitty litter, Ren farts in the bathtub, and, in a unique interpretation of the Rapunzel legend, Ren climbs up to save Stimpy from the tower by means of the cat's nose hair. You never saw Bugs or Scooby do that. "I wanted to do a show for the kids that was just like Christmas," explains Kricfalusi. "To give the kids every kind of kid joke you could think of and, whether Mom, Dad, or the media like it or not, to hell with it. I, amazingly enough, have to fight for every single booger, burp, or fart. Every single wild thing is a huge battle. I should add that any other network wouldn't let us get away with half the stuff, though."

Nickelodeon's progressive attitude toward the show's bodily-function enthusiasm has paid off. "We get inches of fan mail every week and from all age groups, too," says Kricfalusi. Spumco, Kricfalusi's excellently named company, is on a roll. Twenty new episodes are in production; both aficionados and novices have much to anticipate. Among promised highlights: Stimpy runs away and joins a '60s girl group, the Cellulettes. "They have a great step called the Cellulite Dance where they wink their thigh meat at you," notes Kricfalusi. In fact, music is a constant and recurring preoccupation of *Ren & Stimpy*. The cat's favorite rock star, Stinky Wizzle Teats,will join the show to introduce the "Happy Happy Joy Joy" song to an amazed world. A lesser luminary, Frank Zappa (a big fan, as are ZZ Top and Nirvana) will also be guest-starring—as the Pope. Eewww—gross.

Which recent moving image provoked the strongest reaction from you?

Lars Ulrich of Metallica "R.E.M's 'Shiny Happy People' video! I have never wanted to do a John Bonham with my television, but this is the closest it's ever come!"

Mike Mills of R.E.M. "The eyes of [released hostage] Edward Tracy—the haunted but somehow vacant stare of a man just released from five years of captivity to a world he no longer comprehends."

Juliana Hatfield of Blake Babies "The last scene in *Dogfight*, when River Phoenix comes back from Vietnam and hugs the ugly girl for a really long time. River started crying, and so did I."

Matthew Sweet "In the 'Space Madness' episode of *Ren & Stimpy*, when Ren gets space madness and eats a bar of soap: 'Oh, my beloved ice cream bar, how I love to lick your creamy center and your oh-so-nutty chocolate covering!' I laughed so hard, I cried."

Mark Arm of Mudhoney "When the Bailey family is reunited and showered with gifts from friends and relatives at the end of *It's a Wonderful Life*. I can watch this touching sequence over and over again. And heck, I do."

Cameron Crowe, director of *Say Anything* and *Singles* "*Studs*—the *Goodfellas* of dating game shows. It's funny, but seething and vicious just below the surface."

Compiled by Staci Bonner

I DEMAND A RECOUNT

Neglected, abused, condemned, scorned—seven movies you thought you hated. JONATHAN BERNSTEIN puts the case for the defense.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Basic Instinct **(TriStar)**
This testosterone-charged psychosexual wankfest shudders onto the screen with clouds of controversy in its wake. Vile, they call it, sleazy and exploitative. Well, I'd hope a movie centering on an ice pick–wielding, voracious, sapphic hellion would be nothing else. Especially when the lady in question is essayed by Sharon Stone in her laudable drive to become the blond bitch who gives you the biggest bang for your buck.

Rubin & Ed **(IRS)**
You love Crispin Glover, right? You think he's a genius, a holy fool. Try to hold that thought as you sit through this tortuous two-hander, in which Glover, the titular Rubin, sets out to bury his dead cat while TV's Howard Hesseman (*very* poor) tries to drag him to a sales seminar. Lone highlight: Crispin seeking sustenance by sucking sweat from his sneaker.

Memoirs of an Invisible Man **(Warner Bros.)**
Long in the works, this adaptation of H.F. Saint's hard-going, high-concept novel puts a seriocomic wrinkle into Chevy Chase's smooth, smug persona. Both Chase—only bankable as Griswold of the *Vacation* movies—and director John Carpenter could use a legit hit, but somehow I just can't see it being this one.

Johnny Suede **(Miramax)**
Some guys have all the luck. Not only did Brad Pitt make a smash debut in *Thelma & Louise* as the sexy sociopath who unleashed the wild mustang inside Geena Davis, but he's also shacked up with *Cape Fear*'s stellar thumb-sucker, Juliette Lewis. Must give off a scent or something. Here, he plays a no-talent musician with a skyscraper-high pompadour and a pair of magic suede shoes. Could be your luck just ran out, Brad.

JONATHAN BERNSTEIN

1) **Gremlins 2: The New Batch**
This long-unawaited sequel came and went so fast nobody noticed that it was the biggest fun in town. Joe Dante's original nasty-as-they-wanna-be creature feature traumatized tots by the ton. Relocating his varmints to the much more simpatico environs of NYC, Dante concocted a wild contraption—a zinger-filled nutball farce that was every bit the elongated Warner Bros.–style cartoon *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* wasn't. And, you know, anything with Phoebe Cates.

2) **Tango & Cash**
For your enjoyment: Soviet émigré director Andrei Konchalovsky's obvious zeal at smashing up as much of America as he can; central casting scumbag Brion James entering with the most authentic Cockney accent since Dick Van Dyke and exiting with a grenade taped to his nose; Kurt Russell in a dress. Soft shuffling through the carnage and car crashes, Russell and costar Sly Stallone suddenly evolved into the Sunshine Boys of Big Bang movies, barely stifling chortles amid the chaos. Not since Hope and Crosby—sequel, please.

3) **The Adventures of Ford Fairlane**
Around the negligible presence of putative star Andrew Dice Clay, the unlikely tag team of Finnish destructomaven Renny Harlin and *Hudson Hawk*/*Heathers* scenarist Daniel Waters mounted a teeth-rattling assault. For your enjoyment: the best music-biz-bashing movie since *The Girl Can't Help It*; Waters's Byzantine plot and reference-packed syntax; and Clay getting the sort of success he's always deserved.

4) **Big Trouble In Little China**
Kurt Russell—the greatest living American actor? No, but his prolonged collaboration with John Carpenter was one of the most rewarding relationships in modern cinema history. Here, the duo draw inspiration from the Hong Kong movie machine and its admirable philosophy of "Fill every second of screen time with as much eye-popping, illogical action and entertainment as possible."

5) **I Come In Peace**
My man Dolph Lundgren's big-screen career has not been a giddy dance, last year's offering about an interplanetary drug dealer hit all the right buttons. The script attempted to lend the Swedish meatball a second dimension, portraying his two-fisted cop as a closet connoisseur of fine wines. Amazingly, Lundgren's subsequent attempt, the equally overlooked Marvel comic adaptation *The Punisher* was just as good. Perhaps a subtle Chianti would have helped.

6) **Ricochet**
A party of SPIN staffers went to see this pumped-up killathon on my say-so. Next day there was a mess on my desk. Guess I won't be invited over for another Werner Herzog night, eh guys? Straddling shameless big-star ambitions and noticeable revulsion at his material, Denzel Washington started off at fever pitch and just kept building to one of the looniest lead performances in years. Simian Tinseltown pasha Joel Silver knocks out one of these pornoviolence epics every other month, and even *he* seems to hate them. So go make *Fitzcarraldo 2*, fatty.

7) **Action Jackson**
Flattened in *Rocky IV*, decimated in *Predator*—when Carl Weathers finally got a riot of his own, no one was there to watch. A shame, this flick had a whole bunch of stuff going for it: Weathers's super-dry *drôlerie*, a blond Craig T. Nelson as the embodiment of evil, and Vanity as the embodiment. *Another* Joel Silver picture. Either his output is overlooked or I've written this fantastic screenplay that would be just right for—

Things
are
changing
Love's
Alright
it coming
Eddie
Murphy

DREAMING AMERICA

NOTES OF A NEW JACK

BY SCOTT POULSON-BRYANT

Sweet Release

"IT'S MUSIC FOR ORGASMS," SAID RENEE.

"For what?!"

"For orgasms," Renee said. "You know what an orgasm is, don't you?" She shook her ass for emphasis. "This is music for orgasms, for gyrations."

Molly stood up and started to shake her ass, as well. "I don't think so," she said. "Then again, I was, like, twelve when this music had its heyday." She whipped her arms around her, up and down, back and forth. "Although I do remember the time I walked into the living room and my mother was kneeling back and my father was twisting his ankles and singing, 'Ahhh, freak out.' "

Renee sat down and leaned over to lower the music. "Did you join them?" She smiled, lighting a cigarette with the candle on the coffee table. "My parents used to go to the Flagstone. I used to beg them to let me go. I always thought that Nile Rodgers would be there—at this rinky-dink disco in Long Island. I was in love with Nile Rodgers." She looked at the candle dreamily.

Molly shook her head. "I didn't even know who the man was until I bought Madonna's *Like a Virgin* album. All this talk about Nile Rodgers. Madonna didn't sound like no disco that I remembered." She took a drag off Renee's cigarette. "Actually, I remember his name on David Bowie's *Let's Dance*. Now that I think of it, that sounded kinda like disco."

Renee turned the volume up a little. "Well, Chic was part of my thesis—"

"Your thesis?" Molly said. "Oh. That's right—you went to Brown, that playground school."

"Actually, it was quite an intellectual piece of work. I wrote about the impact of disco on popular music and culture. You know, that whole *Saturday Night Fever* syndrome. It was called 'What's a White Guy Like You Doing in a Place Like This?: Toward a Racial Definition of Disco in American Society.' Renee's eyes seemed to glaze over with the memory of her canonizing coed days.

Molly's eyes rolled. "Oh, brother," she said. She stood and started to do the bus stop—up and back, side to side, clap, turn, shimmy, again.

"Remember those strings? The way the women sang in unison, no soloing? Luther Vandross doing backgrounds? 'Clams on the half-shell and roller skates, roller skates?' " Renee joined her friend on the apartment's shag-carpeted dance floor. "That was life. I felt free and—"

"Twelve years old," Molly finished. "Life? You ain't had no life. And you still don't if the *Saturday Night Fever* syndrome is your idea of intellectual investigation."

They danced.

"You're just jealous," Renee said.

"Of what?"

"You're just jealous 'cause—" She paused. "Oh, fuck it."

Molly asked, "Do you really think disco had that much of an impact on the world?"

Renee glared. "I'll have you know that disco was the soundtrack of the gay liberation struggle."

"Who told you that?"

"A drag queen I interviewed for my thesis."

"Well, then who told *him* that?"

Renee glared harder. "Enough, Molly. You just don't understand. You're too cynical. I don't even know why I started. Girl, you probably never even had an orgasm."

"I—"

"No. Forget about it," Renee said. "I was gonna give you *Chicism*, the new Chic album. But now I know you just don't get it."

"Stop overdramatizing."

Disco sucks. It's dead and dated and tacky, and to love it is to live.

FROM THE RENEE BUTLER FILES, circa 1988:

The Chic Mystique. It draws people together and it tears people apart.

Disco sucks. It's dead and dated and tacky, and to love it is to live.

Disco is the hard bourgie bop of black pop. It's the casual revival of slick surfaces and buried meanings. It's Cole Porter in blacked-up drag.

It's voguing down a runway in a House of Dupree ball.

Disco is the background of hip hop's earliest memories.

The Chic Mystique. It was disco.

"OVERDRAMATIZING IS ALL I KNOW how to do," Renee said. She turned down the music and sat at her desk. The candle made dancing shadows on her brown face.

She continued. "Disco was the most honest kind of music. Because the poses struck were so grand. The attitude was about survival."

"You're so caught up in the lifestyle of it. What about the music?"

"Nile was the star. He could make anybody sound good. The guys from Chic produced Sister Sledge that time and turned them out. They turned Debbie Harry out. Remember 'Backfired'? All those other projects . . . ?" Renee began to get that glassy look in her eyes again.

"Well," Molly said, almost whispering, "what about his solo stuff."

"What solo stuff?"

Molly looked at Renee. "His solo stuff. He did solo albums, remember?"

Renee pondered this. "I don't remember any solo stuff. No, he only did that production stuff." She blew out the candle and put on the overhead light, as if that would jog her memory. "I think you're wrong, Molly."

"Yeah," Molly said, reaching for her sweater. "You're probably right." She reached for her sneakers, lying on the rug next to Renee's psychedelically maroon platforms. "I think I gotta get ready to go."

Renee put another CD into the deck. "No, not yet. I want you to hear the new album, *Chicism*. It's marvelous."

"I'm sure it is, Renee. You know I like Chic."

"Then why were you being so negative?"

"I wasn't being negative. I was just asking you some questions. That's all."

"And after this we'll play Diana Ross's album, *The Boss*." Renee started to stack CDs near the deck. "Then Sister Sledge's *We Are Family*."

Molly took off her sneakers.

Renee grabbed her arm. "C'mon. Let's do the bump."

The record played. "Chic mystique. . . . Sweet release."

And they bumped.

ANASTASIA VASILAKIS

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SPINS

REVIEWS EDITED BY JIM GREER

PLATTER DU JOUR

BOOGIE DOWN PRODUCTIONS

Sex and Violence

Jive

After the spare and beautiful sound of *Criminal Minded*, Boogie Down Productions' 1987 debut, it seemed likely that BDP would forever rank among the greatest hip hop acts of all time. But following the murder of DJ Scott LaRock in 1987, and the release of the impressive follow-up, *By All Means Necessary*, BDP's KRS-One proceeded to drop a series of albums that were increasingly didactic. The scratching and the beats consistently took a backseat to the sometimes bizarre and ponderous teachings of rap's self-proclaimed first poet and teacher.

Which is why it's so inspiring to listen to side one of BDP's fifth studio album, *Sex and Violence*. The disc starts out with "Instrumental," built out of several samples from *Criminal Minded*, including "South Bronx," "Criminal Minded," "The P Is for Free," and "The Bridge Is Over." By sampling so much from his first album, KRS sets the stage for one of the themes of *Sex and Violence*, an album on which he reminds listeners repeatedly that Boogie Down Productions has been on the scene for six years (or "twelve semesters," as the teacher puts it in the title cut).

Zany malapropisms abound throughout *Sex and Violence*, and there is a sense of delight, confidence, creativity, and sheer pleasure that KRS-One has been unable to generate since *By All Means Necessary*. The second track on the album, "Duck Down," is one of the funkiest. The beat is an old-school Run DMC–style stomp, but the bass line is strictly fresh for 1992. The effect is urgent and surprisingly lean-sounding. The next cut, "Drug Dealer," urges crack merchants to organize and put their business acumen to better use. Check the lyrics carefully: KRS isn't just advising dealers that they should go legit, but also that they should organize into a unified, efficient Mafia. It's a theme that he's been speaking about in lectures for several years now, and the musical version—with a chorus sung to the tune of "This Old Man"—works nicely.

The fourth cut, "Like a Throttle," is the high point of the album, and ranks among the best rap songs of all time. It starts with KRS giggling and humming in falsetto to himself, as though no one were listening, and then suddenly proclaiming that he is the "ardicle don"—Jamaican slang for top dog. The song is an indignant attack on "emcees [who] become Muslims on the mike when it's convenient." The music is based around a simple, syncopated riff, which jogs left and then bangs a quick right like an evasive running back. In "Build & Destroy," KRS disassociates himself from the rhetoric of Five Percenters and sticks it to black assimilationist pigs in one breath: "It ain't enough to study Clarence 13X / The white man ain't the Devil, I promise you / You wanna see the Devil, take a look at Clarence Thomas. . . / Throw in the towel, the Devil is Colin Powell." On "13 and Good," KRS weaves a complex tale of statutory rape, gold-digging, and some other ill things. Side two is less funky than side one, and more pedantic, as in the case of the freakishly academic "Q&A." The beats on side two tend to be less varied, but there are a few nuggets of dancehall toasting on "Say Gal" and "How Not to Get Jerked." The title cut assaults wannabe gangstas, and contains the memorable lines: "People died so I could rock / You think I'm gonna rock the mike and waste my nation's time? / Then step off with that weak shit / You're psychologically, historically, and spiritually sick / Plus, you're on my dick."

Dimitri Ehrlich

STEVEN DANA

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WORLD BEAT

Mzwakhe Mbuli

BY RICHARD GEHR

IF NOTHING ELSE, PAUL SIMON AND "people's poet" Mzwakhe Mbuli have this in common: Each risks his life whenever he performs in South Africa. Speaking on the eve of Simon's recent unsuccessful tour there, Mbuli, the South African soul mate of England's Linton Kwesi Johnson and Jamaica's Mutabaruka, condemned attacks on the promoters of Simon's concerts by the Azanian National Liberation Army, noting that although the African National Congress opposed it, most other anti-apartheid groups did not. Meanwhile, high ticket prices insured that as many as 95 percent of those attending the concerts would be white. (It could have been worse: At least Simon didn't puke all over Mandela's lap.)

"People wonder why the government and the ANC sponsored Paul Simon," says Mbuli. "People wonder why they haven't supported local music." In spite of Mbuli's having sold thousands of records in his home country, his potent words and exciting music have been banned from South African television and radio, on which 80 percent of the music is foreign, Simon-ized.

"I am like a telex of culture," chanted Mbuli on his first album, "flowing messages through the beatings of the drums." Released in 1988, *Change Is Pain* is a jazzy and vibrant gush of word-sound-power that was immediately banned in South Africa for being "inflammatory." A second record, *Unbroken Spirit*, was composed while Mbuli was in solitary confinement during the lengthiest of his eight detentions, and sold more than 25,000 copies without airplay. *Resistance Is Defence*, his new record on the increasingly vital Earthworks label, is a tough, palpitating convergence of township rhythms and hardline rhetoric. According to this Zulu follower of Nelson Mandela, recent South African reforms have been cosmetic at best.

"I will write about a free South Africa when South Africa is free," Mbuli says. "People are dying in this country; death squads are still financed by the government. Mandela has no vote, I cannot vote. And the right-wingers are gearing themselves up for a war, bombing schools, post offices, and government centers that have opened their doors to blacks."

The survivor of three assassination attempts (most recently a grenade attack on his house last May), Mbuli is an underground star. Though he is now a full-time musician-poet and no longer involved in hard-core politics, he must still appear furtively. "I cannot guarantee my safety," he says. This May he begins a four-month tour, which will bring him to the United States for shows that Mzwakhe Mbuli himself has no qualms about describing as no less than revelatory.

"After every show," Mbuli promises, "even those who are bored fun-seekers—those who have nothing else to do but to go and watch whoever is playing at the particular nightclub or concert—will be shocked and never stop thinking or talking about Mzwakhe, even if they do not know how to pronounce it."

WONDERFUL WORLD

Pinchers, *Bandelero* (Pow Wow); **Various Artists,** *Ska Bonanza: The Studio One Ska Years* (Heartbeat); **Outback,** *Dance the Devil Away* (Hannibal); **Guy Klucevsek,** *Flying Vegetables of the Apocalypse* (XI).

COWBOY JUNKIES

black eyed man

★★★★ "EXCELLENT" – Rolling Stone

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is a heterophobic slur, this EP offers four takes—two tough, two tender—on romantic distance. While the debut LP, 1990's *Pod*, was likably stripped down, *Safari* shows impressive sonic ambition, chock-full of sound effects and treated guitar. The title cut is the highlight: a surging showcase for Deal's million-dollar sigh in which the band speeds down the Congo (or is it the Charles?) on an investigation of the untamed male animal. On "Don't Call Home" ("Anyway, don't call this home . . . / Don't even write), Deal tosses off a flip series of kiss-offs over a musical score that keeps erupting into a hysterically squeaking and sputtering guitar.

No one other than the mighty Shangri-Las could have inspired the combination of trashy guitar, eternal pop hooks, and Deal's near-camp, lovelorn innocence on the early Who cover, "Sad About Us," and "Do You Love Me Now?" The latter culminates in an over-the-top chorus of loopy background vocals, which brings the song to a roaring conclusion.

Ivan Kreilkamp

SOCIAL DISTORTION

Between Heaven and Hell

Sony/Epic

Mike Ness, singer-songwriter-guitarist for Social Distortion, used to be a hard-living man in all sorts of real interesting ways, I'm sure, but he's been clean for some time now. Driving around L.A. in his vintage something-or-other recently, listening to a tape of *Between Heaven and Hell*, I discovered that while Ness may have successfully conquered many of his dependencies, he's still a rock addict. This is a good thing.

Social D.'s Hank Williams–*cum*–Ramones hacksaw buzz is more refined on *Heaven* than on 1990's *Social Distortion*, and while Ness' songwriting hasn't evolved in any significant way, the songs sound more focused, better thought-out. Little trace remains of the band's early '80s Orange County hardcore

roots, except maybe in the attitude, leaving only as pure and driven a rock combo as you're likely to find on either side of the punk/rock fence.

Admittedly, Ness's rock'n'roll mythologizing would be harder to take from a less believable character, but when this guy sings "Born to Lose" you can tell he's been there. I'm just glad he's still around to celebrate it—*Between Heaven and Hell*'s greatest virtue is in its unforced authenticity.

Jim Greer

THEY MIGHT BE GIANTS

Apollo 18

Elektra

Historically, the problem with quirky college rock acts (XTC, Camper Van Beethoven, et cetera) is that their zany, irony-laden po-mo approach enervates the music's emotional and intellectual heft. There's nothing toxic about, say, the Violent Femmes' stuff—it's too lightweight, too harmless—and the best rock, like the best food, is always toxic.

I used to give They Might Be Giants credit for recognizing that, and for not pretending to be a rock band: The duo thing, the accordion, the wacky stage show, the affected nasal voices together packed enough parodic punch to get me past the fact that the songs were just, you know, kind of ordinary. But on *Apollo 18*, the boys seem determined to downplay their quirkish non-rockness in favor of emphasizing their, you know, kind of ordinary songs.

Which is too bad, because when you start focusing on the Be G.'s song construction and lyrics, they turn out to be even lamer than you thought. Lyrics, especially: songs like "Mammal," "Dinner Bell," and "Which Describes How You're Feeling" come off as bad Dr. Seuss cops, and lines like "My evil twin, bad-weather friend" ("My Evil Twin") are so clumsily clever you're almost embarrassed for the two Johns. Musically, attempts at experimentation like "Spider" and "Fingertips" suffer from excessive silliness and timidity—too few ideas stretched too thin.

That said, the best song on the album, "Narrow Your Eyes," is also the most direct lyrically and simplest musically. So maybe I don't know what I'm talking about. It's not T.M.B.G.'s artifice I object to—I hate sincerity, ask anyone—it's the *quality* of their artifice. The band's music doesn't illuminate anything, big deal, but neither does it take me out of myself in any way. It strikes me as slightly bent solipsism, too shallow to be attractive or even interesting

Jim Greer

REVENGE

Gun World Porn

Capitol

Seeing that a) acid house has been replaced by even more frenetic and less melodic stuff; b) the Wax Trax/Belgian body music scene has grown harsher and faster; and c) Manchester-style bands have crossed over to the American teen market, it's not difficult to understand why this gang of old punks (featuring New Order's bassist, Peter Hook) would choose to cruise the indie dance bandwagon scene. *Gun World Porn* is generic dance music: It seems

a little too calculated, and sounds a trifle too boring. The freshness of a lot of the recent crop of limey indie dance bands is just not present, and while the Revenge press kit puts a lot of emphasis on the aggressiveness of the band's guitar-based dance music, I have to disagree. This is a smooth, slick, and bland disc, with none of the dirtiness of, say, Ministry, or the throb of the Shamen. Maybe Revenge looks upon this as sophisticated adult-oriented dance music, but it can't compare to either the Electronic album or any Pet Shop Boys.

Starting Revenge was as exciting as starting Joy Division or starting New Order, according to Peter Hook. Unfortunately, listening to Revenge is nowhere near as exciting.

Johan Kugelberg

CURVE

Doppelgänger

Charisma

I've come to mess with your head," murmurs lead singer Toni Halliday on "Fait Accompli," in an invulnerable, take-no-prisoners voice, "and I'll make you feel good." She does all that and much, much more—brilliantly. It's lyrics like these—and Halliday's self-assured delivery—that set Curve above and beyond all the other Cocteau-manqué acts coming out of England these days.

Doppelgänger, Curve's first LP, more than lives up to the promise the band showed on its EPs (one of the tracks previously appeared on the EP *Cherry*). From the opening track onward, be prepared to get swept up in stratospheric, Sensurround soundscapes, with lush guitars, hypnotic melodies so deep that you could drown in them, and haunting lyrics, with Halliday's launch-you-on-a-thousand-trips voice soaring above it all. It'll leave you seduced and abandoned, not knowing exactly what hit you but begging for more of whatever it is—all from this wondrous, psychotropic flower of an album. Like the singer herself, it's a thing of beauty and a joy forever.

Katharine Ristich

PETER CASE

Six-Pack of Love

Geffen

Now this is more like it. After the wan folk stylings of *The Man With the Blue Postmodern Fragmented Neo-Traditionalist Guitar*, Peter Case has wisely resumed his career as a rock'n'roll shouter Produced by the able Mitchell Froom, *Six-Pack of Love* zigzags madly across the pop landscape in a merry attempt to keep the proceedings fresh! and exciting!, offering everything from bump'n' grind ravers ("Deja Blues") to sensitive, twangy laments ("Last Time I

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Queen

Snigger if you will, but Queen produced five of the best rock records ever. JIM GREER explains.

THE BEST THING ABOUT LISTENING TO MY QUEEN ALBUMS ON CD IS THAT MY ear still fades out the music where my eight-track player used to change programs. (Go ask your mom what I'm talking about.) The worst thing is that it gives me a chance to reassess the band's '80s output (stuff like *Hot Space*, *A Kind of Magic*, and *The Miracle*), discovering in the process that I was right: Most of it sucked. So when I say Queen was my favorite rock group ever, I'm talking about a very specific period, from '73 to '76.

During that time, the band released five albums—*Queen*, *Queen II*, *Sheer Heart Attack*, *A Night at the Opera*, and *A Day at the Races*. All are available on shiny new CDs, often with bonus tracks and remixes, from Hollywood Records, and rank with the prime output of any group ever—and yes, that includes da Beatles and da Stones. After that, from the mediocre *News of the World* on through '91's not-bad-if-you-don't-compare-it-with-the-old-stuff *Innuendo*, Queen pretty much lost it. To which rock cliché did they succumb? Was it "internal tensions" (my personal fave), laziness, or, as some have hinted, Freddie's haircut? Fact is, though, the only worthwhile thing Queen did in the '80s was show how much better a singer—and songwriter—Mercury was than hanger-on David Bowie (see "Under Pressure"). Whatever, five brilliant albums is still a hell of a lot better than your favorite band, dear reader, is likely to come up with, eh?

What Queen did for me as a kid growing up in the suburbs in the 1970s was teach me the value of antisocial behavior. Meaning that none of my friends liked the band, but I stuck with 'em anyway (the band, not my friends). From the first time I heard "Killer Queen" (still a classic of the period) on the seventh-grade school bus to the day I heard "We Will Rock You" and, um, started to have doubts. I can remember playing "Father to Son" from *Queen II*—possibly the most perfect Zeppelin/Beach Boys pastiche ever—for my best friend and saying incredulously over and over, "You don't *like* this?"

In retrospect, it's easy to see what he didn't like. Queen was a bit off, wasn't it? Not nearly as one-dimensional or straightforwardly rock'n'roll as our other heroes, Aerosmith, Boston, Sabbath, and Skynyrd, Queen introduced an element of uneasiness into the already-confusing world of adolescence, and was therefore taboo. Which to me was cool; I thought Queen was Art the way I thought *The Lord of the Rings* was Art. My love for the band was a way of placing myself above my peers, and of feeling misunderstood—essential for any budding misfit. Which I guess makes Queen my version of the Cure, an extremely depressing thought.

Doubtless there was an element of homophobia to my friends' antipathy as well, though at the time I didn't notice. It was only about six or seven years ago that I realized Freddie Mercury was, as renowned sociologist Lars Ulrich would put it, "very unheterosexual." Not that it matters, now, but I think I would have been bummed, or at least confused, at 15 years old. This is relevant only because I suspect the same homophobia was at the root of most critics' condemnation of the band as well—how anyone could call Queen "fascist" (see Dave Marsh's famous pan of *Jazz* in *Rolling Stone*) compared, say, with Bruce Springsteen's Nuremberg-style love-ins is a source of some befuddlement.

Queen was for me a straighter path to punk rock than was Sabbath or Led Zep, or, for that matter, Patti Smith. Alienation is alienation, no matter how many overdubs you use, and the distance from "Nothing really matters" ("Bohemian Rhapsody") to "No feelings" (Sex Pistols) is infinitesimal to someone who has no real sociocultural link to either sentiment. What I liked about Queen was the same thing I would like (when I belatedly discovered it) about early Pere Ubu: The band was beyond my experience.

Oh yeah, and I also liked the music. Listening to those records today, they're still cool—*Sheer Heart Attack* is probably my favorite, but that could be just because I'm sick of *A Night at the Opera*, which is most fans' pick. Brian May's painstakingly orchestrated guitar sound has no real precedent or antecedent in rock; along with Mercury's amazingly elastic voice, it's the defining characteristic of Queen's music, and the reason why no one will ever be able to pull off a convincing replica of the band's trademark sound. I always admired the way the band put "No synthesizers!" on all of the albums up to *The Game* ("This album marks the first appearance of a synthesizer . . . "), like if it had used one no one would buy the record (I didn't know what a synth was, but hell, if Queen hated 'em, I did too). One of the band's greatest strengths was that all four members wrote—John Deacon wrote "You're My Best Friend" and "Another One Bites the Dust," and Roger Taylor wrote "I'm in Love With My Car"—and three out of four sang. The resultant stylistic breadth was awe-inspiring.

I was in the process of writing this piece when Freddie died, which was no real surprise, but a complete drag nonetheless. I hope he knew how much he meant to how many people. I hope he died happy.

From left: Roger Taylor, Freddie Mercury, Brian May, and John Deacon.

Looked") to a rockabilly boogie Jerry Lee Lewis would dig ("Give It a Go").

Mind you, these swell grooves don't overshadow the leading man. Despite a few incisive tunes—including "It's All Mine," a portrait of a psycho—Case doesn't always impress as a writer, 'cause he's too interested in being clever. But the man's a devastating singer, capable of scorching earth when the hurt gets too big. The steaming "Vanishing Act" suggests a John Mellencamp who finally grew up, while the blistering angst of "When You Don't Come" justifies comparisons to John Lennon. Note especially the inarticulate howl tucked into the final bars of the jittery "Why?" It's Peter Case at his best, delivering a moment of painful ecstasy. Go, boy!

Jon Young

THE WEDDING PRESENT

Seamonsters
First Warning/BMG

Steve Albini and the Wedding Present don't mix. Albini, formerly of the very loud Big Black, is a producer with punch (remember the Pixies' *Surfer Rosa*?), and for the second time—Albini also produced part of 1990's *Bizzaro*—the Wedding Present, heretofore one of England's more annoying Cure clones, stomachs a hit. Yet *Seamonsters* is a piranha.

Take "Dalliance," the album's opener (and a U.K. Top 30 hit in 1991): Singer-songwriter David Gedge proceeds in characteristically mopey fashion, but by the end of the song his precious imprecisions are drowned out by what I presume to be an Albini-issue sheet of noise. The guitars on "Dare" take off on their own halfway through, as muddied and wanton as My Bloody Valentine at its current best. "Rotterdam" sounds like an early R.E.M. outtake, except that the melodic vocal is almost imperceptible—it's a sneaky trick that makes you pay even more attention to its attenuated spook.

As for *Seamonsters*' lyrics, the Wedding Present, like another Leeds lot, Gang of Four, writes cleverly, even when sonic considerations preside. Or at least Gedge enunciates cleverly. This stuff is punk for pop people—words are just words. To wit, "Dandare," one of three U.K. B sides tacked on to the U.S. album, is a Duane Eddy-meets-Wire instrumental—wordless and perfect.

Alec Foege

YOUNG GODS

TV Sky
Caroline

It was an amusing gimmick, while it lasted. The Young Gods are three Swiss loonies who use samplers not to quote memories that've already come and gone, but (theoretically) as sound-machines *per se*. So unless you listen real close, in which case you'll zero in on the Billy Idol riffs, you can mistake them for "real" instruments. (Some say this is the "right" way to use samplers, the way the nuclear UFO stuff Allen Ravenstine used to do in Pere Ubu was the "right" way to use synths. Some are fools.) Well, anyway, I played their first two CDs, *The Young Gods* and *L'Eau Rouge*, an awful lot while getting work done these last two years; I knew they were dumb, but they were bumpity and coagulated enough to block out distractions. No *songs* ever sank in, though. On *TV Sky* the Young Gods aim to fix that.

I respect the attempt to impose structure onto the amorphous goo—it's the only way music can really *matter* to anybody, in the Stooges/Quarterflash sense. So *TV Sky* rhymes with "TV Eye," and "Dame Chance" tries a Stoogelike beat. We get Sabbath trudge, on-the-road pulse-noise looping, too much Wax Trax–ish death disco, and more ethereally electric spaciness than you'd expect. But "Summer Eyes," an overextended epic with trashy Ray Manzarek organ counterpointing slowly-exploding-satellite techno-to-

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the album
ALIVE + EVENFLOW
the songs
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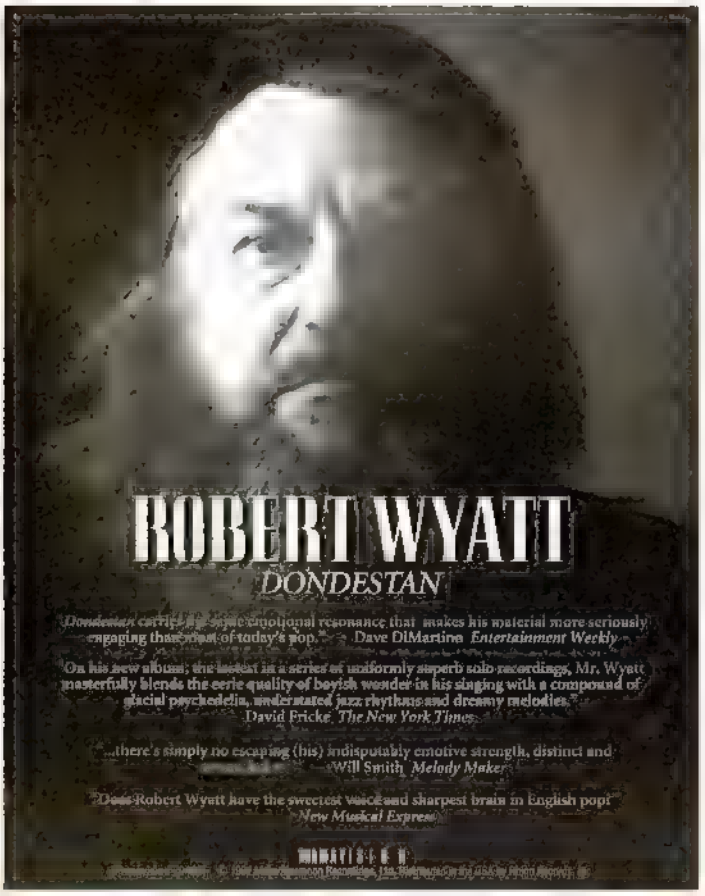
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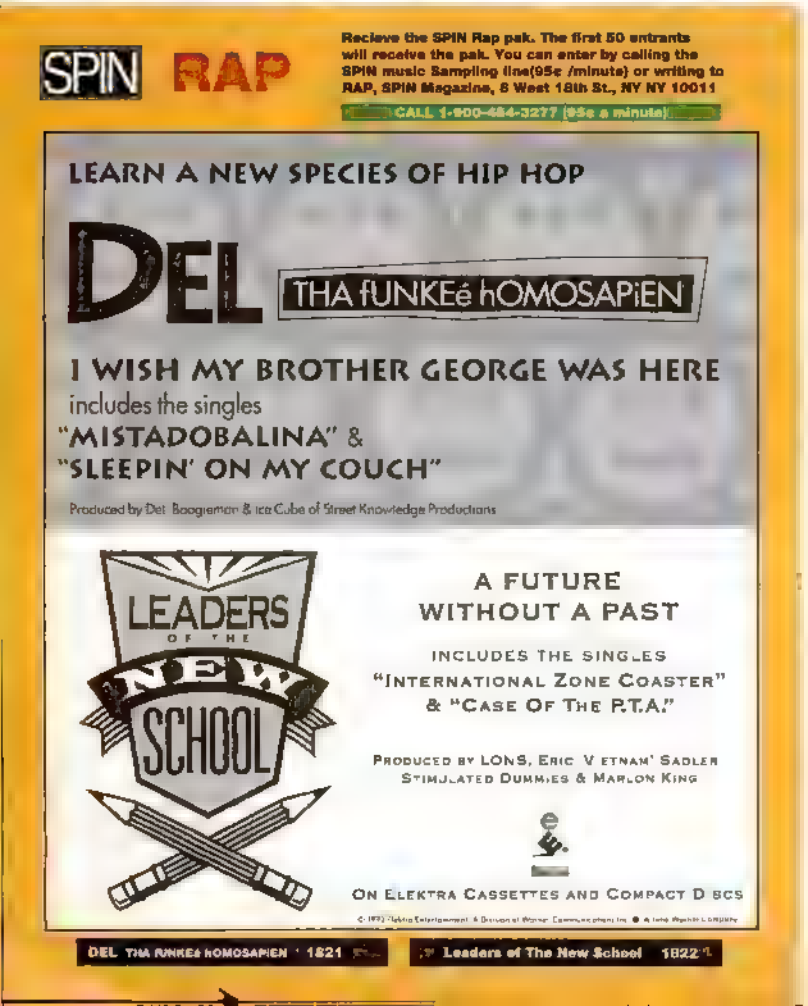
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metal-to-jazz atmosphere, works "best," which is to say it'll hold your attention once. And Franz Treichler's dorky Euromoan has got to go—seeing that Doors movie hasn't helped him much.

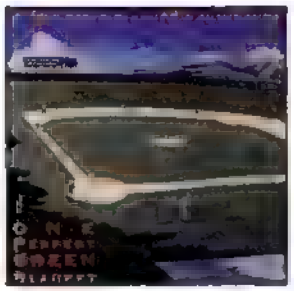
Chuck Eddy

BARBARA MANNING

One Perfect Green Blanket

Heyday

On a San Francisco that's become home to the nation's most creative rock scene, Barbara Manning is the cleanup batter. Playing with the short-lived World of Pooh, a rock'n' roll ménage à trois taut with sexual tension, an unsentimentally emotional Manning marked herself as the band's modest star. Now on her own, she's enlisted a team of friends to perform her extraordinary electric folk songs. "Scissors," a rocked-out confession of violent urges, has become her signature tune: In Manning's hands an acoustic guitar can gouge and tear as surely as a sharp piece of metal or a hate letter, but her songs more often provide a balm to the cruel wounds of love. Since ours is a world in which it's hard to forget, easy to get hurt, and the home team doesn't always win, we need these songs—ten from her 1989 LP *Lately I Keep Scissors* and eight new ones.



Our genial heroine and her assorted musicians display talent and good taste throughout, making the most of understated instrumentation and knowing how to place a bit of feedback or a cello for maximum effect. Manning is preternaturally sensitive to the nuances of bitterness, hope, and paranoia in romantic love, alert to the hurtful strategies she and those she cares about employ on one another. "There'll always be someone who hates you somewhere" is a truth you may not want to hear. No less painful is "You're not forgotten, but you are gone / Somewhere happy without me"—lines Manning sings with devastating sadness and no self-pity. Not just "every pretty girl," Manning is a singer-songwriter with a sharp mind that can cut.

Ivan Kreilkamp

MCH BAND

Es Reut Mich F . . .

Globus International

The most famous progressive rock band from Eastern Europe is undoubtedly Czechoslovakia's Plastic People of the Universe. But in the many years since their classic debut LP, *Egon Bundy's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, they've gotten sorta dull. The recent release by their current incarnation, Pulnoc, should prove my point. Those bugged by the distressingly prosaic sound of these former titans are directed toward this two-record set by the MCH Band.

Es Reut has some of the Zappa-descended arrangement-weirdness that seems so ubiquitous in eastern European avant-rock circles, but there are lots of other textural subtleties and clangs here, making it clear that the band's alliances with members of two other bands, Art Bears and This Heat, are not the product of mere tokenism. The lyrics are Greek to me, but the musical motion is lopsided, noisy, and prog in the best sense of the word. This is an excellent set of sonic bluster'n'blubber that oughta have wide appeal among the more discerning readers out there. (*available through Wayside, P.O. Box 6517, Wheaton, MD 20906—or send an IRC to Praha 6, Dejvicka 31, Czechoslovakia*)

Byron Coley

ELECTRIC EELS

God Says Fuck You

Homestead

The Electric Eels inhabited the same '70s Ohio milieu as Pere Ubu, the Pagans, X-X, the Styrenes (whose new *It's Artastic: Cleveland 1975-79* is prog crap), Rocket From the Tombs (whose recent *Life Stinks* is Ubu-redundant), etc. Friends and enemies have been taping their old 45s and outtakes for me for years, but I never quite "got" it—just like Richard Hell's Voidoids, they came off like prophets of all the "hurtful guitar" (read: Everything else sucks) outfits that populated minilabels such as Homestead throughout the '80s: lopsided-to-forced rhythms (no bass, almost no drums), mewling singer with

a lisp and a shtick.

God Says Fuck You, a comp of everything the Eels ever vinylized and more, confirms my skepticism somewhat, and not just 'cause it's on Homestead. But the two axes really are pretty amazing—piling on drones, dirt, ringing riffs, repetition, and feedback that Miles Davis might've liked. And there are other moments, too—orgasmic grunts, New York Dolls and "Land of 1000 Dances" allusions, hooty backup hooks, depression that links Sergio Leone to the Swans, off-key clarinet parts that almost *fit*, underground rock ("Sewercide," har har), a song called "Agitated" that agitates like the most Kenmore-like washing-machine rock this side of the Surinam quintet Traffasi's lost 1985 single "Wasmasjein." Too performance-arty for sure—but no Homestead hacks ever rocked like "Jaguar Ride" does.

Chuck Eddy

THE CHIEFTAINS

An Irish Evening
Live at the Grand Opera House, Belfast
RCA Victor

Not even Roger Daltrey's self-deprecating charm can rescue the lead singer of the Who from seeming like the fustiest crust on the block, as guest among the sprightly Chieftains, belting out renditions of the Who's "Behind Blue Eyes" and the standard "Raglan Road." Ireland's Chieftains, led by the mercurial piper-producer Paddy Moloney, have behind them almost 30 years of mixing their mostly traditional music—tin whistles, bodhráns, uillaann pipes—with styles it has little in common with, besides exuberance. As a result, they remain subtly polemical.

American singer-songwriter Nanci Griffith fares better; her "Little Love Affairs" and "Ford Econoline" blend remarkably well with the Chieftains' arrangements, perhaps explaining why she's a bigger draw in Dublin than Denver. What's in between, though, is pure rock and reel. The live concert's "Opening Medley" starts slow with a repetitive fiddle part and builds to manic rejoice. The 70-plus-minute CD touches upon the sacred ("Theme From *Tristan and Isolde*," a Wagner rip-off) and the profane ("The Stone").

Irish Heartbeat, the popular 1988 album that melded Van Morrison's Celtic soul with the Chieftains' lyrical mysticism, didn't work. The genre-bending inevitably caught Morrison cross-dressing, grooveless. Listening to flutist Matt Molloy gallivanting his way through "The Mason's Apron" or to fiddlers Martin Fay and Seán Keane parry on "Rachamíd a Bhean Bheag," it's hard to imagine the Chieftains were to blame.

Alec Foege

SUPERCHUNK

Tossing Seeds (Singles 89-91)
Merge/Touch & Go

For the last few years, North Carolina blitzpop combo Superchunk has occasionally issued 7" singles on its own label, Merge, in addition to its two LPs for Matador Records. This Touch & Go—distributed anthology collects those sometimes difficult-to-find sides to stunning effect. Despite the fact that a few of the songs turn up on *Superchunk* and *No Pocky for Kitty* (their epochal anti-boss anthem, "Slack Motherfucker," for instance), this comp is well worth your bucks.

Especially since side two (tracks 8-13 for CD heads) presents a stronger case for the band's ascendency to the indie-rock throne than either of the Matador LPs. I mean, I own all the singles, but I'd never played them back to back. The cumulative effect is stunning, and if to this point you've been wondering what all the fuss was about (which can only mean you've never seen them play live), the evidence here should convince you. Along with Pavement, and maybe the first single off Def Leppard's new album, it's the only new music worth listening to.

Jim Greer

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STOLAR TRACKS

Various Artists *Teriyaki Asthma Vol's I-V* (C/Z)
This collection of C/Z's five *Asthma* singles compilations yields 20 impressive, tear-jerking singles with bands ranging from Helios Creed, Hullabaloo, Babes in Toyland, and L7 to Alice Donut, Gas Huffer, Porn Orchard, Dickless, and Nirvana. Hopefully, these choice tracks will have you tearing through your local record store looking for the complete works of these up-and-coming, cutting-edge bands.

Bewitched *Harshing My Mellow* (No. 6)
Ex-Sonic Youth/Pussy Galore drummer Bob Bert heads this New York quintet on its second LP. What could just be a lot of noise, distortion, and more noise turns out to be a dense, churning porridge of sound, with partial thanks going to the production help of wet-your-pants knob turner Steve Albini (ex-Big Black), who puts the melodic, catchy, and noisy grooves in all the right places.

Bad Brains *Spirit Electricity* (SST)
D.C.'s Bad Brains invented reggae-core back in the late '70s—reggae grooves mixed with the driving speed of hardcore—and their enthusiasm sparked many locals to grab guitars and take the genre in their own directions. *Spirit Electricity* is a competent eight-song live compilation of the band's work. If you're interested in hardcore roots, you shouldn't go without it.

Helmet *Unsung/Your Head* seven-inch (Amphetamine Reptile)
The first work to come from New York's Helmet since the brutally delicious guitar-bass noise of 1990's *Strap It On*. On "Unsung," Helmet works with a new brand of thundering riffs, with guitarist Page Hamilton crooning and shouting lyrics you can actually make out. This seven-inch is a real turn-on; it'll leave you panting for Helmet's next full-length work, which thankfully isn't too far off.

The Rollins Band *The End of Silence* (Imago)
The Rollins Band's most impressive and accessible work to date. *The End of Silence* is lyrically and musically angry, no, make that furious, with Rollins packing his pained and brutally confrontational voice into a pleasant package on top of a rhythm section that's tighter and more focused than ever before. For any of you who were thinking Rollins had lost his touch, (would you ever?) this is an enjoyable kick in the face.

These reviews in no way connote band endorsement of STOLICHNAYA

S T O L I
THE RUSSIAN PHENOMENON.

Underground Angels

BY DANIEL FIDLER

HE DOESN'T HAVE MUCH FURNITURE IN HIS apartment. His walls are plastered with concert fliers, band posters, and seven-inch singles. You probably know the guy I'm talking about. He's got four or so crates of the best indie releases imaginable, and he's willing to lend you whatever you want. Call him the angel of underground rock. He gives you some of the most influential music you've heard in years, and for the next few weeks, or months, it's all you listen to.

That's how I got into the three bands below, the first being D.C.'s **Rites of Spring** (Dischord), lords of *emo-core*—melodic, emotionally charged, hardcore punk rock. Let me tell you, once you've had emo-core, you'll never go back.

D.C.'s Jawbox, from left, Adam Wade, Jay Robbins, Bill Bardot, and Kim Colette.

Rites of Spring appeared in D.C. back in 1984 and, playing mostly local shows, juiced up "Revolution Summer," a political and social rebellion that had the punk community there working to better its surroundings. Although punk rock in America began as the angry voice of shy, alienated suburbia, it seemed that no one was willing to confront the anger outside of the slam pit. Spring's singer-guitarist Guy "Fugazi" Picciotto had a raw intensity that touched a nerve in listeners—his shrieks of agony and his sensitivity were far more personal than the standard hardcore fare. Rites of Spring's first, self-titled LP was like a support group. It inspired people to open up to one another and share their feelings. Pick up the CD reissue from Dischord, which combines the band's LP and seven-inch; lock your door, turn it up loud, and let it all out. It's been seven years, but these songs are by no means dated.

While Rites of Spring is an important part of Dischord's past, D.C's **Jawbox** is a vital part of its future. In its efforts to break out of the D.C. stereotype, Jawbox has come up with an idiosyncratic brand of fast, blistering, layered guitar rock, with a bass line strong enough to make your heart skip. On the band's new seven-inch, "Tongues"/"Ones and Zeros," a tasty preview of the group's upcoming album, Jawbox has taken on a second guitarist/vocalist, yielding more sonic excellence than you'll know what to do with. "Tongues" is loud, crisp, and full-on, with vocal harmonies to boot. Catch Jawbox now before you have to wait in line to see them sing "Smells Like Teen Spirit" on *Saturday Night Live*.

If there were seven wonders of the punk rock world, southern California's **Bad Religion** would probably constitute all of them. The band's been putting out albums on its own label, Epitaph, for ten years (the most recent two have each sold close to 100,000 copies), but remains hardcore's best-kept secret. Since its formation, Bad Religion has played standard, albeit highly charged, three- to four-chord rock, combining the energy of punk with smooth pop arrangements. But it's always been the words and vocal harmonies of singer-lyricist Greg Graffin that set this band apart. On its new LP, *Generator*, Bad Religion's formula hasn't changed, but just keeps getting better. The band remains angry and rebellious, its playing deliciously feverish. Live, it's still scathing. And considering that bandmembers now have families and Graffin teaches at Cornell, well, I guess that's Punk Rock Wonder No. 8.

A band is nothing without guitars, but how about guitars with no band? No. 6 Records tackles this question with *Guitarrorists*, a 26-track compilation of indie-rock artists recording multitracked guitar solo compositions. Even if you were never one for six-string wonders, it's still a rare treat to see contributors ranging from Thurston Moore of Sonic Youth and Kat Bjelland of Babes and Toyland to Tom Hazelmeyer of Halo of Flies and Steve Albini (ex-Big Black) break free from band stereotypes and go off the creative deep and Sometimes tender, sometimes angry, and sometimes frenzied, this musical poetry reading is a must for anyone looking for finger-licking insight into his or her guitar heroes' heads.

Dischord Records, 3819 Beecher St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20007 (include a stamp); Epitaph Records, (213) 957-7555, No. 6 Records, (212) 529-6565.

JIM SAAH

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AIDS

continued from page 81

that CMV was a very important factor in this disease was apparent in 1981," says Sonnabend. "CMV does many bad things to the immune system. It is immunosuppressive. It increases immune complexes. It is associated with lower T-4 cells and autoimmunity. Many of the problems that we see in AIDS can be seen in acute CMV infection.

"But the problem that people pointed out was that CMV had been around a long time and had never caused pneumocystis before," says Sonnabend. "Well, that may be true. But on the other hand, if you look at the original cases of pneumocystis among babies, they all had CMV, as well. So I'm not saying that CMV alone does this, but certainly it is an immunosuppressive agent, and it's acting as a strong cofactor."

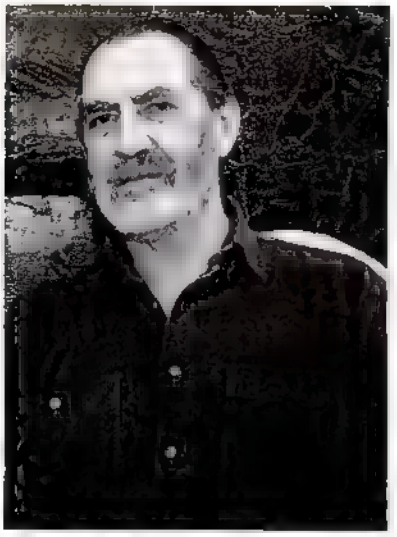
Sonnabend is medical director of New York's Community Research Initiative on AIDS (CRIA) and founding father of the "multifactorialism" theory concerning AIDS. Sonnabend has authored several detailed papers about the possible role of immunosuppressive cofactors such as CMV, EBV, and immune responses to semen. As early as 1981, when the first patients began to appear, it was clear to him that many factors were acting in tandem to create the immunological catastrophe seen in AIDS. He deduced this from a thorough examination of environmental factors among his almost exclusively gay clientele. One notion is that semen is an immunosuppressant. He postulated that when several infectious agents are repeatedly introduced into the bloodstream, the immune system finally goes haywire, possibly attacking itself. This is what is known as "autoimmune disease," and more and more researchers are speculating that AIDS might be just that.

"[Infected] semen has tremendous amounts of CMV," Sonnabend explains, "so if you continually get reinfected with it, it becomes not the usual, controllable CMV infection, but rather a massive, intensified infection. And we know that people develop antibodies to the semen itself."

That CMV is an important cofactor seems indisputable. In a study of 108 HIV-positive hemophiliacs, the risk of developing AIDS was calculated as two-and-a-half times higher in those who were infected with CMV.

It is rare to find a sick, HIV-positive individual who does not have a cocktail of viral infections. The question is, what came first? Does HIV, as official wisdom would have it, pave the way for the immunosuppression that then leads to other infections such as CMV, EBV, and others? Or do they all work together simultaneously? What makes HIV a stronger candidate than any of the others is a very hazy issue. The only thing that distinguishes it is that it was previously unrecognized—which seems insignificant, except in terms of research funding. HHV-6, for that matter, was also a previously unrecognized agent. And it, too, even by researcher Dr. Robert Gallo's own admission, wreaks havoc on the immune system.

While Sonnabend's theories were for many years blasted as irrelevant—and homophobic for suggesting that the life-style of gay men might be a factor in the development of AIDS—he is now emerging from a decade-long process of vilification followed by vindication as a pioneer and a hero, much as that image makes him squirm. Quite simply, he is the most concentrated pool of direct experience, data, observation, and wisdom around. "This study is intriguing because it suggests that Sonnabend has been right about CMV all along," says Spencer Cox of CRIA. "This is exactly what he said ten years ago."



Dr. Joseph Sonnabend.

Indeed, ACT UP's recent critique of the federal reponse to AIDS has incorporated many of Sonnabend's ideas—the same ideas that it once dismissed.

"Every single prediction Joe has ever made about AIDS has come true," says his No. 1 fan and patient, Michael Callen. Callen is going on his 11th year since his AIDS diagnosis, and he attributes his longevity to Sonnabend's independent treatment strategies, among them high doses of acyclovir, which Callen has been on for years. "If I could have found a crazy, dying, gay millionaire and convinced him to back Joe, I honestly believe AIDS would be over by now. Alone, in a laboratory, he could have solved this problem."

Read This Book

And speaking of epidemics, the chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) epidemic has hit not just thousands, but possibly millions of Americans. Unlike AIDS, however, it gets very little media attention. The government is trying to deny it even exists. One paper that has paid attention is the cutting-edge gay weekly *New York Native*, also the first to report on AIDS. Its reporter Neenyah Ostrom is the only journalist in the U.S. who has been chronicling the CFS epidemic in detail since 1988. A synopsis of her findings has now been published in a 76-page book titled *50 Things You Should Know About the Chronic Fatigue Syndrome Epidemic*. To give you a taste: The disease that is crippling the nation is, guess what, an immune dysfunction. Sound familiar? It's debilitating, it's contagious, and it's being ignored. This book is sharp, fascinating, and terrifying. I only wish it were science fiction. To get a copy, send $8.45 to TNM, Inc., P.O. Box 1475, Church Street Station, New York, NY 10008.

DANNY CLINCH

Deadheads

continued from page 77

8. YOU CAN'T REMEMBER WHAT YOU CHOSE TO FORGET

Software has rained money on Ben. He has amassed a California fortune that hums like crickets on Ronald Reagan's ranch on a hot summer day. Thank you, Bendix. Thank you, Morton Thiokol. Thank you, GE, Bechtel, Honeywell, and Motorola.

Ben can even forget about his pair of $650 Ball Suisse ruined while waiting in line for tonight's concert, shoes he purchased just this afternoon in San Francisco after sifting through T-bills in the Bank of America VIP vault. He should have known better. Last night, flying in from Boston, the pilot had asked the passengers to pray for rain—a storm dallying off the coast was trying to make up its mind whether to swing inland.

But because of today's rain and his wet shoes, Ben can de-sock with the rest of the Deadheads without feeling guilty—guilty his wealth precludes his continued membership in the '60s culture of his youth—an era he now views through an AT&T commercial soft-focus lens: a mutt puppy chewing Crazy Susan's shawl outside the Avalon Ballroom; sunsets over Daly City viewed from San Bruno with microdot freak chatter inside the bus sounding like Charlie Brown's teachers; nibbling daisy petals in mellow Leandra's polished redwood Edwardian Kleenex box in Menlo Park; getting naked on Muir Beach.

Dead concerts. Without them, the '60s would be extinct. Ben has used his money to follow the Dead around the world over the past years: Cairo, Dijon, Lille, Boulder, Rotterdam . . . pursuing that era, refusing it permission to die.

Ben remembers an old science fiction movie he once saw, *Silent Running*, in which earth had been nuked and a spaceship—an ark—loaded with seeds and trees, traveled the universe in search of a new planet to call home. Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum tonight feels like that craft—the 1960s being the dead planet and the young Deads, the seeds.

Ben scans the freaks. Koo-koo survivors. Casualties. Ben doesn't consider himself a casualty, but he knows a fraction of his linear thinking capacity has been lost because of his tripping. But maybe nonlinearity has helped him with his defense-related computer work. Ben's daughter, Skye, says he's a spazz. "You can't be your age, go to Dead shows, and *not* be a broken person," she says. Children of the '90s are so hard.

Ben, like most of the older Deadheads at tonight's concert, is wearing a genuine article of 1960s culture, a T-shirt reading HELLO SAN FRANCISCO—PLEASE IDENTIFY YOURSELF. No need for anybody here to know he has bank accounts in Luxembourg.

Skye says hippies dress randomly, like drifters or bag people. "Scary. If you *have* to wear that '60s hippie shit, coordinate it, *please*." Skye's own neo-'60s fashion theories of calculated randomness seem to have strayed from the true essence of hippie couture.

"The '60s were about who you *were*," Ben tells Skye, "not about what you looked like."

"Take a bath, Dad."

At the suggestion she attend tonight's show, Skye rolled her eyes and plunked a new Pet Shop Boys CD into her CD-Man, then elevatored down to the Mark Hopkins lobby in search of celebrities. So instead, Ben attended the concert with Allan, an old pal from the Fillmore West era now working as a vascular surgeon in Millbrae. Allan left at halftime: "Great show, Ben. Have to split, though—replacing an alcoholic's veins in the morning. Call you soon."

Sigh. Even the bikers are gone these days, and Skye's right—the aging holdouts are starting to look like cartoonified versions of themselves—*Freak Brother*-esque beards and vests and denims; Mansonian lovegod pantaloons with tattoos and rainbow wear. ("Dead shows are like a theme park, Dad, GroovyWorld.")

And everybody's so poor these days, too. It was so popular for decades to bash the middle class and then suddenly, *pffft*, the middle class evaporated, and now we miss it dreadfully. Nonetheless, just because other people are poor doesn't mean one shouldn't try to hang on to one's *own* wealth. Let's be sensible. Ben gives to panhandlers; even they seem more like moochers these days. Just when and how did the world become so polarized?

Another sigh. Dope, not acid, for Ben this evening, and not much dope at that. A triangle call with Dresdner Bank is scheduled tomorrow at 6:30 A.M. plus an interview with Skye's teachers at 8:00 P.M. back in Massachusetts.

A lonely gulp of cola.

Strange how when you're young you have no memories. Then one day you wake up and *boom*, memories overpower all else in your life, forever making the present moment seem sad and unable to compete with a glorious past which now has a life of its own.

Says Skye, "Dad, you always complain people my age never protest about anything, but the first moment we even try to make a peep, you ex-hippies are the first to slam us, saying we're nowhere near as passionate or effective as *you* were in those fucking '60s. Make up your minds. Stop making us have to subsidize *your* disillusionment with the way *you* turned out."

Ouch.

Ben reclines and watches galaxial splashings of Bic lighters span the darkened coliseum's seats. He knows the music will be ending soon. And he wonders—with fear and confusion and a sense of loss—about the alien planet on which tonight's spaceship will be landing.

9. TECHNOLOGY WILL SPARE US THE TEDIUM OF REPEATING HISTORY

Erik and Jamie were going to go swimming tonight, then head to Leon's house for coffee where the suitably postmodern theme for the evening was to be "Commercials We Hate and the People Who Love Them." Jamie was going do her imitation of Suzanne Somers using a Thighmaster and

Erik, his impersonation of Ann B. Davis flogging Minute Rice. But just as they were headed out the door, Sherrilyn, "the Krazy Hippie Broad from 2-B," ran up the stairway, handed Jamie two Grateful Dead tickets, gibbered, "A miracle is yours," then charged off, peeling down Bancroft Avenue in her Celica to visit her mother at the Kaiser Permanente Hospital in Sacramento.

"Why not?" they said, dashing back inside for a costume change, hoping to construct an appropriately Summer-of-Love getup, eventually cobbling together a slightly oversanitized and possibly "too Gappy" [Jamie's expression] version of drugged hippie abandon: 501s, desert boots, beat-up sweatshirts, baggy sweaters, and of course, "love beads."

That was hours ago. And now the concert is nearly over and Erik and Jamie are "fleeing" the Oakland-Alameda Coliseum a few songs before the show ends.

"I grew up thinking hippies would destroy the world," says Erik. "And I still do."

"At least the place was mercifully free of mimes," adds Jamie.

The two dash through the parking lot's rainy darkness, past the cold, moist Deadheads who didn't receive the miracle of free tickets yet still party forlornly, and out to the Switzerland-clean interior of the 1975 Pacer Jamie bought for $900 last summer, Elvis.

"You didn't eat anything back there, did you Jamie?" asks Erik, opening the door. "Those people stick acid in *everything*. I don't want you jumping out the window, thinking you can fly."

"I felt like Andy Warhol in there," says Jamie, "when he'd visit Fire Island with speed freaks in the '60s—eating only candy bars and soda pop so he wouldn't get dosed. Does anybody make laptop microwave ovens? We could have brought Lean Cuisines."

The car starts.

"Put in a tape. Quick," pleads Jamie.

"Which tape."

"Songs about robots. Written by cash registers. *Anything* to counteract that hippie noise."

New Order saturates the warming car. Erik and Jamie have returned to a future they can live with—spare, secular, coherent, and rational—a future reflecting their almost puritanical belief that excess is its own punishment.

And yet while Erik and Jamie are relieved to return to a familiar world, and all too ready to tease the world they have recently vacated, they are also feeling a sense of being let down—as though tonight's Grateful Dead concert offered a promise, however accidentally Erik and Jamie might have arrived at the coliseum, which was not delivered. They had presupposed that such a radically different Deadhead way of life would offer constructive new hints on how to deal with the new thought-based economy the world is plunging toward. It didn't.

"Jesus, what's with all those skeletons those people worship, anyway?" asks Erik rhetorically. To Erik, skeletons equal death: first strikes, X-rays, rot, Biafra, poisoned milk. "Bloody creepy. Nothing cute or loveable about them. Brrrr. . . ." The only positive skeleton iconography Erik can conjure is an old David Bowie song, "Chant of the Ever-Circling Skeletal Family," a quirky bit of padding from the *Diamond Dogs* album—an essentially wordless song that evokes in Erik's head images of jets filled with skeletons forever circling the world. Erik has analogized this vision to vaccines: glossy protein shells (the jet's metal body) filled with dead core RNA (skeletons inside). Erik's superstition is that as long as 747s circle earth, humanity remains immune to an unknown scourge that would cast it back into the mud.

"You know what tonight reminded me of?" asks Jamie. "That cartoon we saw in grade school—of a modern nuclear family trapped back in prehistoric time that befriends a caveman family. One week the cave family would learn about, say, toasters, and then the next week the teenage cavegirl would learn about, say, dating. It's like, Deadheads aren't from *now*—they're from someplace else—they're that cave family. They're just improvising with whatever's lying around here—school buses, et cetera, waiting until they die. They have no commitment to where and when they are. To the society we live in."

"You're just projecting your worry about eroding social commitment in general."

"I guess."

The car pulls out of the lot, past Deadheads holding cardboards begging for rides to faraway places: Wisconsin, Kamloops, and Morristown.

"Sorry, guys," says Erik.

They wait at the red stoplight.

"I bet if we did acid we could understand what Deadheads are all about," says Jamie.

"You go first. And write me a postcard."

"No, *you* go first."

"No, *you* go first."

"No, *you* go first."

"No, *you* go first."

The light turns green and Jamie drives on, turning left, heading toward the 880 on-ramp. The car windows have steamed up. Erik wipes his window with his sweater and sees a bright light up in the sky over to the left. He rolls down the window a fraction and focuses on the light's source. There to the west over an Oakland industrial park, ascending the sky above the Unisys tower, what he had thought was the moon, is a jet.

10. HOW CLEAR IS YOUR VISION OF HEAVEN?

The babies are staring at the rain.

Columbia, clutching her three-week-old to her chest, says, "Come on, Luke. Shasta honey, inside," but the twins dawdle outside the van's rusted doors, tentatively splashing their chubby toes in cold puddles. California babies, at the age of four they have lived through dust storms and a hundred salty fogs but have never seen a true rain.

Columbia lugs her children up into the van and places them on their foam pads next to the resting German shepherds, Kashmir and Vanilla. Columbia is confused. Rain is something that is just, well, *there*—not something you remember seeing a first time, like a dead body or a house on fire. She wonders if the children's infatuation with the novelty of wetness indicates a mistake she's somehow made in raising them.

Columbia is also preoccupied. As she undresses the children, preparing them for the rumbling sleep-inducing drive back over the mountains, she is angry with her husband, Ezekiel. She isn't angry with him for leaving her out in the parking lot with the children while he attended the concert—three weeks old is simply too young for a baby to attend a concert and besides, she enjoyed the solo evening hanging out in the lot scene and chatting with the Deadheads rambling past the van. No, instead Columbia is angry with Ezekiel because of his neglectful behavior back at their house, at their small redwood-shingled geodesic dome in the sierras of Lassen County.

"Bundle up, sweetie. We're heading home soon."

"Back to our house?" asks Luke.

"Yes." Columbia places Sarah on the passenger seat. "Back to the dome." She helps button on the older children's bedclothes: flannel men's shirts bought for 29 cents apiece at St. Vincent's Thrift Store in Reno. She rights a tipped-over canister of rice then sweeps the spillage through a rust hole in the floor.

Anger. Ezekiel had rented a children's plastic swimming pool in Susanville for Sarah's wet-birthing. Not that Sarah's birth hadn't gone well, mind you—almost deliciously painless, with Sarah weighing almost twice as much as Luke and Shasta did combined—rather, the problem is that Ezekiel never bothered to empty out the tub of the afterbirth and water. The mixture has been sitting in the swimming pool outside the dome, day in, day out, for weeks, evolving into a bizarre dead playboy's layered cocktail: rusty tomato aspic topped with a pissy yellow vinegar solution. Columbia is disgusted thinking of drought-parched bears and wolves and eagles up in the mountains sipping her fluids; Ezekiel on the other hand is aroused by the thought. Columbia is unable to make Ezekiel's mental leap from abomination to mythic sensuality.

When Ezekiel emerges from the concert, which ought to be soon, at least he'll be too out of it to continue the terse mood which marked their drive into Oakland today. Columbia is, she supposes, being uptight. But *really*. And those poor people in Susanville must want their pool back soon. And *where* will the money come from to pay them?

The twins jiggle sweetly under their quilts, and Kashmir and Vanilla snuffle up against them, providing warmth. Circling their necks are purple neon glow-strip plastic necklaces given by Ezekiel's tree-planting partner, Pete, before the show.

The children are tired but a touch edgy. The drumming of the rain on the van's steel roof is enervating them. They want a story. Columbia, sitting on her stool propped next to the doors, peering out the tiny windows which face the coliseum far in the distance, tries to improvise, thinking of the stories her mother told *her*, growing up in the commune in Mendocino. She thinks of her world. She sweeps a streak of dirty hair away from her young brow.

"Once upon a time," she begins, "there was an

continued on page 107

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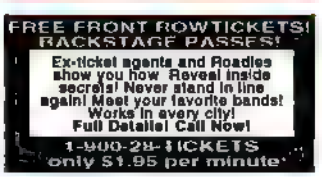
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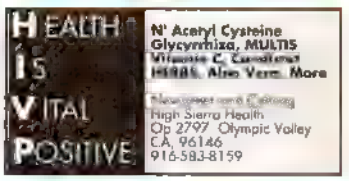

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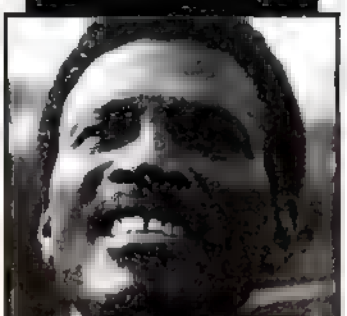
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Deadheads

continued from page 102

enchanted city."

"A real city?" asks Shasta.

"Yes, honey. A real city."

"With deer?"

"Yes, honey. With deer." Columbia starts again.

"Once upon a time there was an enchanted city next to the ocean, whose citizens, favored by God, lived with great abundance, and were blessed with lights and bridges and spires and horses that never grew tired."

"And deer."

"Yes, Shasta, and deer. And the citizens of the enchanted city were grateful for their blessings. But the enchanted city had only one problem, and the problem was that the sky above it would not bring forth rain.

"The enchanted city was bone dry. Dry for so so long its citizens could barely remember the feel of water dropping on their skins. Year after year the citizens of the enchanted city prayed for the rains, but year after year, the rains passed the city by. The prayers of the citizens continued—louder and louder—and still the rains would not arrive. The beauty and wonder of their city began to feel tainted, as though a curse had been placed upon them all.

"And then one day a skeleton walked into the enchanted city, and the people of the city were afraid, thinking the skeleton must somehow be connected to the drought.

"The king, standing before the skeleton asked, 'Skeleton, who are you, and why have you visited our enchanted city?'

"And the skeleton said to the king, 'Who am I? I am *you*—I am the skeleton that lies inside you all. I have come to tell you to fear not—your city is not cursed—but I have come to tell you a fact you all must know.'

" 'What must we know, then?' asked the king, still frightened, as were his subjects.

" 'You must know,' answered the skeleton, 'that while you pray for rain, you are also praying a different prayer—a prayer so deep and strong and insistent you are hardly able to know you are praying it.' "

" 'And what may this prayer be?' asked the king, now curious.

" 'It is simple,' replied the skeleton. "While you live in mortal splendor, the price you pay for your comfort is a collapsed vision of heaven—an inability to see pictures in your heads of an afterlife. You pray for rain, but you also pray for pictures in your heads that will renew your faith in an afterlife.'

"The king and his citizens scoffed and quickly sent the skeleton away from their city, and once again resumed their prayers for rain.

"But shortly after the skeleton's departure, the earth trembled, and the bridges shook and the roads of the city tumbled down and the horses of the city were unable to ride.

"The skeleton once again returned to the enchanted city and said to the king and the citizens who once again stood before him. 'I am the skeleton that lies within each and every one of you. While you live in mortal splendor, the price you pay for your comfort is a collapsed vision of heaven—an inability to see pictures in your heads of an afterlife. You pray for rain, but you also pray for pictures in your heads that will renew your faith in an afterlife.'

"Once again the king and his citizens scoffed and drove the skeleton from their city and resumed their prayers for rain, quickly forgetting the skeleton's words. And shortly thereafter a fire swept through the parched city and burned the houses of the rich and the houses of the good and the houses of the righteous. There was a great loss of beauty and the hearts of the city's people were greatly hurt.

"And yet again, the skeleton came forth into the enchanted city and said to the citizens, 'You live in mortal splendor, but the price you pay for this mortal splendor is a collapsed vision of heaven—an inability to see pictures in your head of an afterlife. You pray for rain, but you also pray for pictures in your heads that will renew your faith in an afterlife.'

"And yes, once again the king and the citizens of the enchanted city threw the skeleton from their city, continuing their prayer for rain and denying the skeleton's words. And shortly thereafter, another trial visited the city—the artists who would create and rebuild the burned-down houses of the city's citizens began to sicken and die. The source of the city's beauty and wonder was being forever lost. And at this the king and the citizens of the enchanted city wept furiously and said, '*Enough! Enough! Our soul is dying.*'

"And so, when the skeleton returned to the enchanted city one final time, the king said to him, 'O skeleton, we were wrong to have ignored your wise words. O skeleton, please—our suffering is too great for us to bear. We are losing our soul. Give us pictures in our heads of the afterlife so that we no longer foolishly pray senseless death and destruction upon ourselves.'

"And at this, the skeleton smiled his skeleton smile and said, 'King, you have prayed for rain, but at a deeper level, you have also prayed for evidence to remind you, amid your splendor, of the death which awaits us all. Accept the fact that as we live, we are also dead, and your other prayers will be answered.'

" 'Thank you,' said the king. 'As I am alive I am also dead.'

"And with this, the skeleton raised his bones to heaven and brought forth a bolt of lighting and a flood of rain onto the enchanted city—its spires and bridges and roads and horses—and the citizens of the enchanted city fell to their knees in the rain and thanked the skeleton for his generosity and then danced in honor of all that is good in this world and in the next."

Columbia looks at the sleeping children in the cool darkness of the van.

Her children.

The grandchildren of her own hippie mother.

Suddenly Columbia feels old, or rather, she feels she has reached the point where she can never think of herself as being young again. She feels she has been a conduit through which has flowed an entity older and larger than herself—her mother, perhaps, or the ideas of her mother's times.

Columbia once asked her mother, Melissa, what the '60s were like—Columbia greatly wanted to know how it *felt* to be alive then. Melissa, wistful, planting cilantro seeds in the soil-filled declensions of an egg carton smiled, looked out the stained glass window, and said, "Honey, I'd love to tell you, but they were like a friend who you loved very much but who died of a horrible disease. While you might make new friends in your life, your new friends can never truly appreciate your old, dead friends because no matter how much you try to describe those dead friends, the fact remains your new friends never knew the old friends when they were alive. You just had to be there."

In fairness to Melissa, considering the lameness of her reply to Columbia's inquiry, she *did* come through with the goods in the end. Melissa couldn't help but regale Columbia with endless tales of that long-gone era—tales of gardens and horses and moonlight and tear gas and beards and electricity. And from these tales, Columbia knows that at the heart of the '60s dream lies a core truth, a germ that refuses to die, an essence of purity and love which is open to abuse—and continually abused—but without which Columbia could not live her own life peacefully.

Columbia looks at the coliseum. Any minute now Ezekiel will be emerging, ready for the ride home. Ezekiel. They will sleep in the parking lot tonight, she decides. And in the morning they will drive home.

The concert is over. Columbia's face, feebly lit by sodium vapor lights and barely visible from outside the van's rain-beaded windows, pulls into the depths of the vehicle, as though sinking into a dark lake. All that is visible now from outside the vehicle is water dribbling down the roof onto the darkened glass. Water, water, ceaseless and nourishing, flowing everywhere—flowing down the Highway 24 tunnel up on the mountain, cascading from the Christmas lights garlanding nuclear aircraft carriers in the harbor, through the branches of eucalyptus trees, cold and clear, no hint of stopping. Down all surfaces—the oxidizing melted consumer durables in the Oakland Hills, into the dens of animals sleeping through the storm, through forgotten windows left open in the city. Water, water, beating a drum on the roof of a van in a parking lot, the van in which Columbia's children are dreaming of a dancing skeleton. The skeleton that dances inside of me. The skeleton that dances inside of you.

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BACK PAGE

THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

So what's the deal with all this seven stuff? MARK BLACKWELL attempts to explain.

YEAH, BY NOW YOU PROBABLY GET the picture that this is SPIN's seventh-anniversary issue. Seven years is a pretty long time. If you broke a mirror when SPIN first hit the newsstands, then your bad luck should be running out right about now. If you went to jail to serve the maximum sentence for soliciting the services of an 11-year-old prostitute at that time, you'd be getting out this month. If you were born the day the first issue of SPIN came out, and you're reading this, then you're a hell of a lot younger than our target audience and you must be a really hip little tyke.

If SPIN were run by dogs, then the magazine would've celebrated its seventh anniversary six years ago. This month would actually be its 49th anniversary. That means this issue would be full of references to the number "49" instead of "7." Perhaps it would include a feature on the San Francisco 49'ers or the gold rush of '49 or something. But then again, these subjects would be of very little interest to dogs. The magazine would also be called SIT or STAY or BONE instead of SPIN, because dogs don't really listen to records.

Throughout history, the number 7 has been very important. Ancient Egyptians considered it the symbol of eternal life—the most perfect and the most sacred of all the numbers. Its strength was passed down from the time of the Chaldeans and the game of dice—the opposite sides of dice always add up to seven. Go get some dice and try it for yourself if you don't believe it's true.

The legendary physician Hippocrates (How do you ship hippos? In hippocrates) divided life into phases of seven years in the tradition of the Pythagorean philosophers. During the first seven-year period "teeth are erupted." So these days SPIN should be working up a good new set of teeth. The next seven years bring about the "ability to emit prolific seed." So watch for SPIN spin-offs.

Seven 7 things: 1) The human head has seven openings. 2) Rome was built on seven hills. 3) On May 21, 1985, just after SPIN was born, Patti Frustaci, a 30-year-old English teacher from Orange, California, gave birth to septuplets. 4) 7-Eleven. 5) The spectrum has seven colors (remember ROY G. BIV?). 6) 7-Up. 7) In Zoroastrian theology the Amshaspands were the seven highest beings: Ormuzd—life-giver, Bahman—king of the world, Ardibehest—maker of fire, Shahrivar—metal creator, Spandarmat—queen of earth, Khordad—controller of seasons, and Amerdad—ruler of the vegetable world.

There are lots of sevens in the Bible, many of which are found in the last chapter, Revelations: seven vials of the seven last plagues, the beast with seven heads, et cetera. But all that stuff is really scary and we don't want to think about it. Go listen to your Ozzy Osbourne records if you want to know more.

The number seven has also played an eerily crucial role in the development of music. Here are just a few of the more uncanny items: The first phonograph was built by Thomas Edison's mechanic, John Kruesi, in 1877, and was demonstrated on December 7 of that year (note: the names T. Edison and J. Kruesi each have seven letters). On July 7, 1940 (7/7/40), Ringo Starr (real name Richard Starkey—both his first and last names have seven letters) was born, and the Beatles (seven-letter band name) broke up in 1970. In 1957, Pat Boone topped the charts for seven weeks with his "Love Letters in the Sand" (the word *letters* itself has seven letters).

The king of rock'n'roll, Elvis Presley (seven-letter last name), is rumored to have passed away in 1977 in Memphis (seven-letter city). On July 7, 1977 (7/7/77), Alan O'Day's "Undercover Angel" was the No. 1 song in the country. And now, to top it all off, SPIN is seven years old.

But hey, let's put all this seven nonsense behind us. The number we all should be thinking about now is *eight*. It's time to move forward, so hold on, here we go! Let's see. . . eight ball, *Eight Is Enough*, Santa's eight reindeer, I can't believe I "eight" the whole thing. . . .

MARTIN MAYO

THE WORLD VS. SPIN: HOW THEY WERE CREATED

According to the Bible, the world was created by God over a period of seven days. Well, the SPIN of today was created over a period of seven years. Here we compare a select few important points of God's and SPIN's processes of creation.

Day/Year	God	SPIN
1st	Put forth night and day	Put Madonna on the cover of debut issue
2nd	Established heaven	Established the truth concerning Live Aid
3rd	Forged the earth and oceans	Almost went out of business
4th	Provided the sun and the moon	Provided free condom in issue
5th	Put creatures in the sea and the sky	Put Madonna on the cover of fourth anniversary issue
6th	Let man have dominion over all animals	Let Spike Lee guest-edit the magazine, thus giving him dominion over all of us
7th	Rested	Rested!? No way, man!

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I'm Pierre. I was born in Jamaica. And lived there until I was ten, with its white beaches, sun, fresh air, pretty women. Because of political trouble there, my parents moved to the States, to Long Island. They chose America thinking it would be a place where their children could get an excellent education. One year I was lucky enough to study in London.

The guys from the local rugby club there taught me the game. The British are so civilized. Until you get them on the playing field. Clean hitting but hard hitting. Traveling around the world is the greatest experience. You learn from different cultures. I'll always be ambitious which I learned here in the States. I still play rugby every weekend, which I picked up in England. But, most importantly I'll always be laid back– which I get from being raised in the West Indies. I suppose that's why I like the Converse® Skidgrip.® They're cool, comfortable, kick-back casual shoes. In a sense they remind me of home. Of white sandy beaches. Sunshine. And girls in bikinis. In short, a little bit of paradise.

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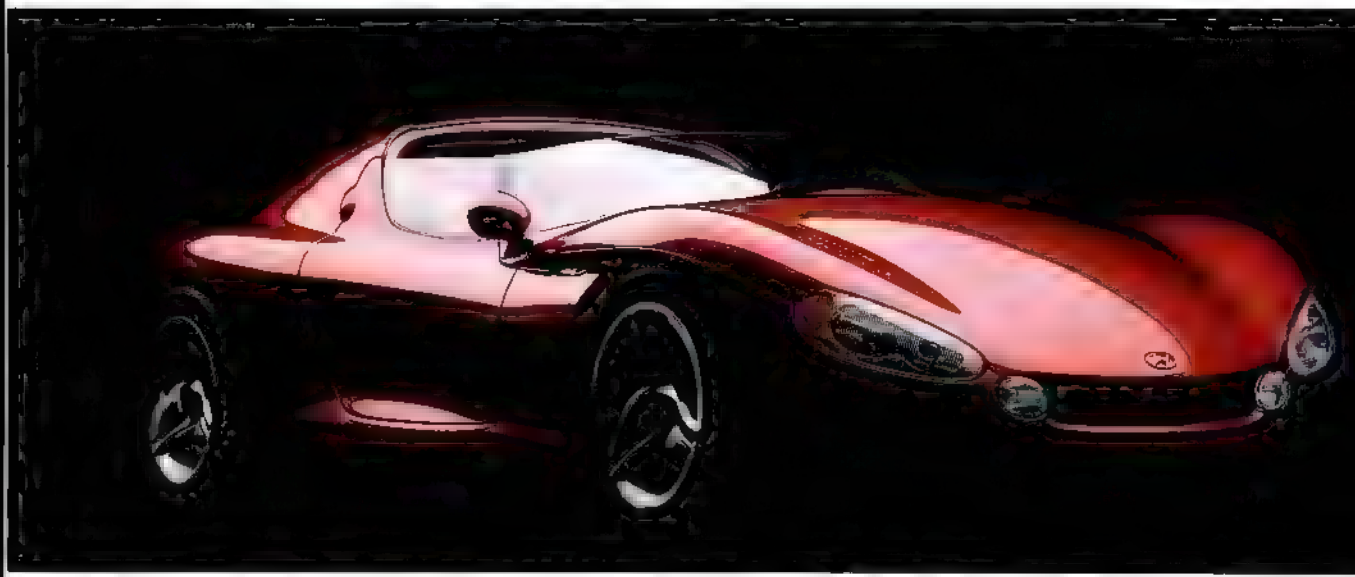

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Several years ago, Mick Jones complained that there wasn't much of a rock audience for dance-based shows. Now that there isn't much of a rock audience, period, we'll see if the Big Audio Dynamite II/Public Image Ltd./Live/Blind Melon tour can break down some barriers and get people off their butts and onto the dance floor.

Alas, touring almost went the way of the dinosaur last year as record numbers just played their records and everyone from Alice Cooper to the Sisters of Mercy went to bed without any supper. Whether it's because a live gig seems quaint to the post-modern punter ensconced among his PC-CD-MTV terminals, or if the gathering of bodies focused around an equally physical source of energy has been superseded by the democratic electronic experience (read: isolation) of techno-cratic dance music, the rock'n'roll show was about as inviting as a lecture on the virtues of collective farms.

But—speaking of collective farms—the jewel in the '91 touring dung heap was, of course, Lollapalooza. Reports that this cross-pollination of alternative music and ideas has created some glorious new counterculture are somewhat overstated—not too many Nine Inch Nailheads became Living Coloureds, Ice-T has not entirely blurred the distinction between rock and rap; Refuse and Resist has yet to announce its presidential candidate.

But the idea that people might like a bit of flavor for their fare is basically sound. It's the variety package—the idea that a musical compound might be more digestible than a straight solution/dilution—that's behind the current Big Audio Dynamite II/Public Image Ltd./Live/Blind Melon tour. The acts were chosen because aside from the tag "alternative" (not redundant because it was never gainfully employed), their common denominator is high.

For Blind Melon, it's a chance to shrug off the Guns N' Roses connection. Main melon Shannon Hoon ripened with Axl Rose in the Indiana heartland, reacquainted himself in the Gunners' "Don't Cry" video, but would like it known that he does have a life of his own, thank you. In fact, metal and melon don't mix . . . the L.A.–based foursome are firmly rooted in '60s psychedelia, adopting and adapting the spirit and soul of Hendrix and Cream without "updating" it with high tech production and brazen posturing.

Live, likewise, has drawn some misperceptions through its association with a famous name. The band's debut album, *Mental Jewelry*, was produced by Talking Heads keyboardist Jerry Harrison, but the buck stops there. Live exudes an unabashed messianic zeal (Bible bashers may note the cynical prophecy "Can anything good come out of York, Pennsylvania?"), and if the chord structures differ from early U2, the pomp and the passion are the same. All right, let's not start any major Bono/Ed Kowalczyk comparisons, Bono's Christian fervor has little in common with the Live lead singer's espousal of individual self-reliance rejecting both religious and sociopolical precedent.

John Lydon has always found himself a hard act to follow, but Public Image Ltd. has provided a framework flexible enough for him to reinvent himself each time out. On his band's 12th effort *That What Is Not*—a title of typical willful ambiguity—Lydon volleys his trademark snarl and whine, plus a little spoken word, across his punkiest guitar attack since the Pistols, no doubt encouraged by Jane's Addiction/Alice in Chains producer Dave Jerden. Continuity is provided by guitarist John McGeoch and bassist Allan Dias, PiL shareholders since 1987's *Happy*. Perhaps Lydon will augment the album's opening track "Acid Drops"—a philosophical look back at his life and times—with a Pistols retread or two when PiL drops onto the stage.

With Big Audio Dynamite, Mick Jones dumped his glorious past (with the Clash) and headed for the dance floor—to rip up and rebuild it from scratch. Now he's back with the sequel, B.A.D. II, focusing on the present while trying to pull the past into a contemporary context. B.A.D. II's album, *The Globe*, is a rock record that embraces the sounds of house music and England's rave scene. Throw in touches of ambient and systems music and you've got *The Globe*, featuring the combined talents of Jones, bassist Gary Stonadge, guitarist Nick Hawkins, and former Sigue Sigue Sputnik drummer Chris Kavanagh.

Let's hit the road!

—Dave Kendall

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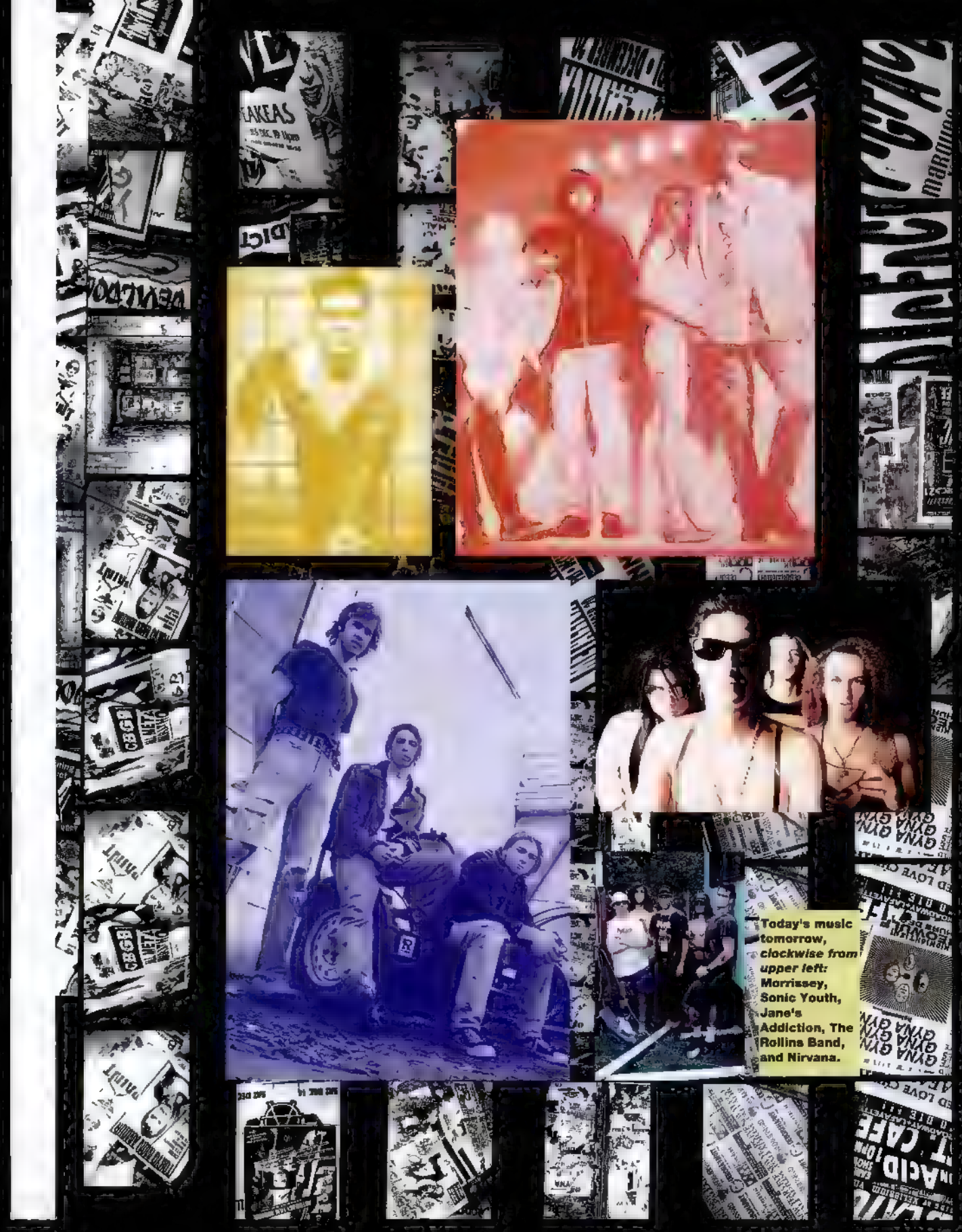
Special thanks to : Andrea Baran • Mark Blackwell • Alec Foege • Bruce Goren • Varlerie Green • Jonathan Keyton • Larry Lieberman • Doug McFetters • Sharon Meran • Joe Mungioli • John Rollins • John Shea • Lauren Spencer • Stephen Webster



Today's music tomorrow, *clockwise from upper left:* Morrissey, Sonic Youth, Jane's Addiction, The Rollins Band, and Nirvana.

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COLLEGE MUSIC ROUND-UP

Jim Greer looks at the future of alternative music, and smiles.

To understand what's going on in alternative music today, you need look no further than last year's Lollapalooza Tour. Summer 1991's soi-disant, all-day arts/entertainment/information festival was a succinct encapsulation of the development of what used to be a ghettoized subgenre. The bands involved—Jane's Addiction, Siouxsie and the Banshees, Living Colour, Nine Inch Nails, Ice-T, Butthole Surfers, and the Rollins Band—represented a neat cross section of what is today called "alternative music," a term that, if it means anything, denotes a common lack of radio airplay. Despite this, Lollapalooza was undeniably the hottest tour of the year, selling out and adding dates even as Guns N' Roses were struggling to fill venues on their much-hyped comeback tour.

If you missed it, you missed an Important Event. ▶

Clearly something is afoot here, though it's not entirely certain what. Most of the fans who came to see the shows were cut from a less-than-variegated cloth, which on the one hand means that Jane's Addiction front man and the primary force behind Lollapalooza, Perry Farrell, was wrong when he predicted in *Elle* that the tour would attract "all kinds of different people from neighborhoods not like their own." But on the other hand it means that alternative music has many more supporters than most music-industry mavens had previously thought, and that something dangerously close to a cohesive movement is slouching toward the suburbs and malls of America to be born. A quick T-shirt check proves this: Morrissey, Pixies, TAD, Front 242, Nirvana, Sonic Youth—a litany of alternative bands connected only by their fans' devotion in the face of mainstream neglect.

So if you're watching, and if you care, what seems to be happening here is that the twentysomething generation is in the process of defining itself—and no place more so than in rock music. We don't want John Mellencamp or Genesis anymore—we want Nirvana and Nine Inch Nails. The music industry is being taught a lesson; no one expected the overwhelming success of a formerly obscure grunge trio from Seattle. In 1991, and on into '92, it's become resoundingly clear that what has formerly been considered alternative rock—a college-centered marketing group with fairly lucrative, if limited, potential—has in fact moved into the mainstream. This music, which encompasses college rock, rap, thrash, metal, and industrial, and has as many variants as adherents, has slowly attracted a larger and larger audience, to the point where the term alternative no longer means anything. Alternative music is purely and simply the music kids are listening to today.

The overall effect of this sea-change is mixed. No, rock isn't dead—if it were, you wouldn't be reading this—but it is, as Paul Westerberg once said, going underground. True innovation is being pushed farther and farther from the mainstream, while the mainstream itself expands to encompass fringes it once scarcely noticed. Five years ago the thought of Sonic Youth being on a major label would have been as unthinkable as it would have been undesirable, today it would seem a gross injustice if they weren't. And hell, why not—seems like the majors these days are buying up anything that moves, or at least moves noisily, as long as the band in question has some sort of independent credibility and/or following. This is good for the bands in the short run, and for some even in the long run, but the overall effect is hardly salutary, especially as it concerns the health of the independent system, which until now has developed and nurtured these bands.

Most likely, this mainstream bloat will deflate somewhat in the next couple of years as the majors realize that it's probably not a good idea to sign every half-assed jangly guitar rock band that comes their way. And that's gonna come as a shock to a lot of bands who signed up thinking they'd have a few years or at least a couple of albums to find their step. There'll be a whole bunch of unemployed clumsy rhythm guitarists--poets in a couple of years. If you're planning on starting a band, you'll probably be able to pick one up real cheap.

Alternative rock icons the Pixies.

So what does all this mean for you, the music fan? Well, it means if you're tired of the sort of tried-and-true corporate rock that's been shoved down your throat for the larger part of your adolescence, you're going to have a lot more good music to listen to. It means that there'll be more tours like the *120 Minutes* tour, and more Top Ten records like Nirvana's—good bands in the pop charts, what a concept! I guess what it means most of all, is that your generation is coming into its own, and that from now on everything that happens is to some degree your fault. Live it up.

—Jim Greer

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ned's atomic dustbin

A beguiling British band jumps high and hits the charts.

Hello mudder ,hello *Fodder*: England's Ned's Atomic Dustbin.

American college radio couldn't have conjured up a band more apropos than Ned's Atomic Dustbin. When five young men from Britain's West Midlands joined forces to form the group in November 1988, surely none imagined how perfectly Ned's would brick up rock's alternative-mainstream great divide. For future reference, success's newest rules of thumb are Keep it mean, keep it lean, keep it raucous and upbeat . . . but never obscene. And then jump around a whole lot onstage.

"A few people have said it's the third British invasion," says bassist Alex, age 20, "but everyone's in it for themselves. We're not an invasion—we just came and played our music." Nonetheless, Alex (no last names, please), along with his bandmates—drummer Dan Dan, guitarist Rat, singer Jonn, and second bassist Mat—will forever be listed in the annals among their high-stepping compatriots, EMF and Jesus Jones. Alex bristles at the well-worn comparison: "EMF is quite a new band, so they are a teen band in England—it's just the 12-year-olds. Originally Jesus Jones had the same audience as we did, but they've changed a hell of a lot since then. They've become a lot more commercial. We're more of a band then they are."

Thrust in front of every cable-ready couch in the U.S., via a heavy-rotation video of "Grey Cell Green" (from the LP *God Fodder*) on MTV, Ned's has made *dustbin* as much of a household word as it could be in a country where people don't even know what a dustbin is. Last year *Mediaweek*, the it-pays-to-be-hip tip sheet of the ad industry, referred to the band as "every mother's favorite." Apparently this revolution has not only been televised—it's been spoon-fed to every sustenance-starved soul in the nation.

"We don't really like fitting in with the alternative scene," says Alex, politely. "And we don't like fitting in with the mainstream. If anybody starts saying 'Oh, they sound too commercial now,' or 'They sound too alternative for the radio,' that's for them to say. But we'll just continue what we were going to do anyway—which is sort of progression and improvement."

Keeping the songwriting process collaborative remains the band's key to self-preservation; it also makes producing pop songs unusually arduous. "I can imagine it's a lot slower than being in a band with a single songwriter," says Alex, "because we've all got to be in the same room."

The well-rounded success of *God Fodder* has made the band's live show a hot ticket in its native land, a feat it hopes eventually to duplicate in the U.S. Not surprisingly though, the band's edgy dance sound, which includes a powerful guitar crunch, two distinct bass parts, and unabashedly appealing melodies, has garnered better reviews here than in England. "We've never really been hip," says Alex. "We've never pretended to be profound or arty, but we do sell a lot of records and we do sell out big gigs. And so therefore the press has to cover us. Which is good, really."

—Alec Foege

SWERVEDRIVER

Swervedriver is a four-member music machine hailing from Oxford, England. The band's major-label debut, *Raise*, lifts you into the outer stratosphere with all manner of mesmerizing sounds. In describing the band's flavor some very hot and modern guitar outfits have been evoked. Rather than reject these references, guitarist and vocalist Adam Franklin embraces them.

"I don't mind that, because we get compared to lots of bands that are quite different," the dreadlocked singer says. "Like, some people say we're a Sonic Youth–Hüsker Dü sort of band, and then others say we're like Ride, Chapterhouse, or Slowdive—and sometimes it'll be Silverfish. Already that's three totally contrasting types of sounds. So in the end, something individual must be coming out of it."

Franklin and bassist Adi Vynes have come to New York City to hang out for the weekend and, as they sit in this yuppified bar, the guys look a bit out of place except for the empty pint glasses lining up on the table. Swervedriver did a few dates in America last July after getting signed to A&M, but now they seem ready to do the country up right.

"Yeah, this time they'll probably chuck us in a rickety old van," says Vynes.

Car culture seems to rule the Swervedriver world—witness titles such as "Son of a Mustang Ford" and "Pile Up." What up?

"Well, someday I'd like to have an old Jaguar," dreams Franklin. "But it's out of my price range."

"I was actually given a car once," says Vynes. "But there were all these permits that I couldn't get, so the car sat there and got loads of tickets and I couldn't even drive it. So I just went out and sat in it once in a while."

—Lauren Spencer

UNCLE TUPELO

When R.E.M.'s Peter Buck called Uncle Tupelo one of the best country bands on earth, he meant it as a compliment. Unfortunately, though, that tag may link this humble trio to *Hee Haw* reruns, Dollyland, and chaw. Uncle Tupelo's second release, 1991's *Still Feel Gone*, however, separates the band from the sillier side of country.

"Country music is the Gremlin or the AMC Pacer of the music industry," bassist Jeff Tweedy says. "It's been reduced to a lot of stereotypes which aren't fair. We have a broader view of country music."

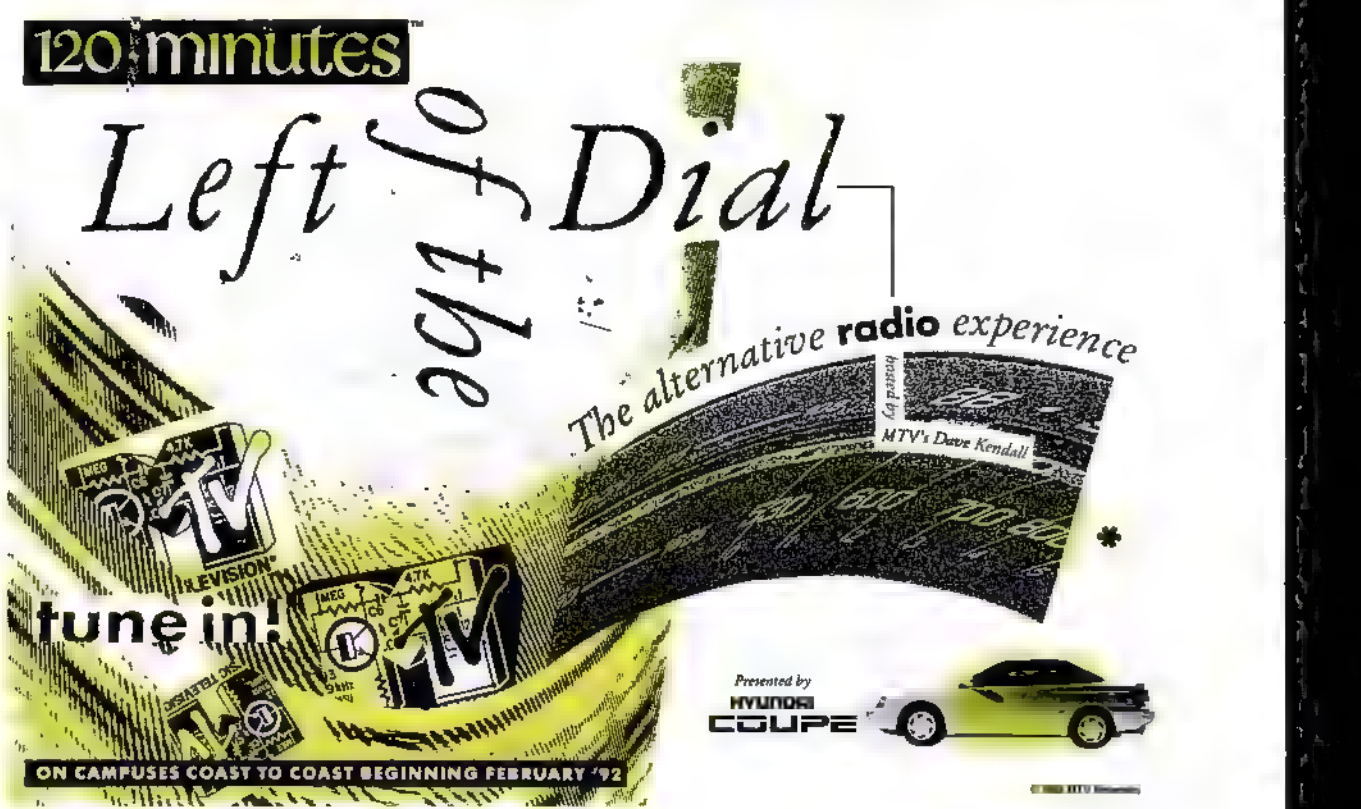
Yeah, about as broad as the band's native Midwest. Though Uncle Tupelo may start with a country base, its songs are flavored with abrupt pacings and grungy guitars. Indeed, a few of country's good ol' boys would probably like to take a shotgun to these disrespectin' rascals for tearing up their sacred territory.

Uncle Tupelo does, however, write about some recognizable country themes, like being stuck in a small town, loving a woman, and her kickin' ya in the heart, and drinkin' to forget all these things. Songs so sorrowful you want to weep into a warm mug of Budweiser.

"We emote too much for some people's tastes," Tweedy says. "It seems like in postmodern art it's unhip to have emotions."

As far as feelings go, Uncle Tupelo needs only two for its lonesome ballads and sonic rockers: sad and pissed off. And when the band lashes out at that town, that woman, that bar stool, it'll leave you limp and the grandfathers of country spinning in their graves.

—Diane Torolan



the Breeders

A band of one's own for the Pixies' Kim Deal.

"She is disgusting. She just lives, breathes, and eats music. I get a headache talking to her about music." So Kelley Deal explains the difference between herself and her rock-star twin sister, Kim Deal, lead Breeder (and Pixies bassist). Kelley's guitar playing on *Safari*, the Breeders' new four-song EP, is a musical reunion for the sisters who began playing together in high school at local clubs in Dayton.

Kelley thought she was finished with fantasies of being a jukebox hero until she heard *Pod*, the Breeders' first album. "I was like, 'Oh! It's pretty. I want to belong.'" Kim Deal made that album two years ago (already), on a longish vacation from the Pixies, with indulgent support from her label 4AD. The other Breeders are labelmate Tanya Donnelly, another alt-rock success subordinate (Kim to Black Francis in the Pixies, Tanya to her stepsister Kristin Hersh in the Throwing Muses); Josephine Wiggs, who left the British band, Perfect Disaster; an American guy, Brit Wolford, playing drums; and a violinist. Everyone got a chance to sing.

Overreactions to *Pod* ranged from "side-project supergroup" (Kim says, "They act like we're Asia") to "just a collection of Pixies B sides and fillers" (no comment). The album does sound familiar to anyone already acquainted with the Pixies, but the building blocks—the guitar mixtures of surfadelic irony and straight-ahead lawnmower buzzing, the plot-like vocal shifts from screeching to lilting—were rearranged into a different Planet of Sound. Listen for yourself: Compare *Pod*'s best, "Iris," to your favorite Pixies ("Gigantic" doesn't count). The Breeders' stuff is less distant, but tougher sounding; less spastic but free-er, with artsy spoken-word tracks.

The poppier direction of *Safari*'s four songs establishes the Breeders where the full album *Pod* did not. "Do You Love Me Now?" doesn't try to rip the way the Pixies can; instead you get angelic vocals lazily rising up out of a golden psychedelic buzz. It made me think of a lightly perfumed glacial striptease—whatever that means. Kim Deal says the lyrics are left over from high school: "They're so embarrassing that I had to use them, to redeem how stupid they sound."

Kelley Deal got her chance to jump on the bandwagon when the band reconvened in New York to record *Safari*. Steve Albini's (Big Black, etc.) production on *Pod* is dressed-down and gritty, but for *Safari*, Kim Deal says, "I wanted it to be slicker. After you've done lots of indie stuff, you can get sick of that amateurish sound. I wanted the music to go through that one machine that everyone uses, to make it sound more like Phil Collins. Like a beer commercial."

—Nathaniel Wice

Clockwise from upper left: Kim Deal, Brit Walford, Josephine Wiggs, Kelley Deal, and Tanya Donnelly

British combo Moose makes beautiful noise.

MOOSE

Moose, the band that has blasted through the British alternative music scene, is now charging stateside with its debut U.S. release, *Sonny and Sam*, a seven-song EP on Virgin Records. Available in CD-5 format, *Sonny and Sam* provides a dramatic introduction to Moose, and contains over 30 intoxicating minutes of guitar-drenched sounds and poignant songwriting.

Okay, wait. I'll admit it. I'm copying the record company press release. Just a little writer's block, I'm over it now. I've always wanted to do that anyway.

First of all you find out the band is called Moose, so you figure it'd have to be really great having such a cool name. but then you find out the band's from Britain and you say to yourself "uh oh, not another one." Then you listen to the record and you're relieved, probably quite pleased actually. Moose sounds a lot like Felt, that early '80s band from England that you probably don't remember or never heard of anyway.It has a sort of Velvet Underground flavor (sure, that's about as unusual as being from Britain, but it's done well here), often laid back to the point of lying down.

Singer Russel Yates deadpans, like a Lloyd Cole with less emotion ,over alluring acoustic rhythms with shimmering vibrato electric guitar layered and faded in from the back seat. At a couple of slower points, you almost expect them to break into the Stones' "Wild Horses" but it never happens. This ain't no Brit Cowboy Junkies though, there's a nice frenzy below the surface here, no matter how muted and restrained it might be.

Um, for further information, contact the Virgin press office in New York or Los Angeles.

—Mark Blackwell

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MANIC STREET PREACHERS

Bands like Guns N' Roses, Black Crowes, Nirvana, and us have helped to put rock back on the agenda. All those indie bands are tawdry and gray," says Manic Street Preachers' bassist Nick Wire in a kind of creaking Welsh John Lydon drawl. Both he and guitarist Richey Edwards—the man with 4 REAL etched up his arms in scar-tissue—are laden with fake leopard skin, fanzine patches and mascara and look as if they have not been to sleep since the release of the first Guns N' Roses album. Probably they haven't. Manic Street Preachers has a mission: to save the world from authoritarianism, repression and My Bloody Valentine.

"We've spent double the budget of the My Bloody Valentine record on our album already," says Nick, smiling. "I'm quite pleased with that."

The upcoming Manics LP *Generation Terrorists* is a monster of rock, a double album of teenage post–Sex Pistols, post–Axl Rose anger absurdity, and shouting. Like the band's insane singles—best of which are the anti-pop-as-anaesthetic "Motown Junk," the sneering "You Love Us" ("I laughed when Lennon died") and the AC/DC-meets-the-Clash-styled "Repeat" ("Repeat after me! F··· Queen and country")— *Generation Terrorists* is wild, raging, punk metal whose infuriated seriousness is saved by glamour, noise, and melody. What more do you want? Trombones?

The Manics' non-party view of life was molded by a childhood spent in a glum, gray town in Wales, where—if their own legend is to be believed—they lived only for their record collections and the music press.

"We never had anything to be positive about," says Richey. "We were in town where there was nothing to do. The only entertainment was the media and the media was offering us nothing. Every week, we used to read the music papers, and it would take us all week because we would read every single thing in there. It really mattered to us."

The Manics divide music into Rock and Not Rock. Rock is Manic Street Preachers, Rolling Stones, Sex Pistols, Public Enemy, Hanoi Rocks, and the Clash. Not Rock is everything else.

"Rock's rich tapestry and its history have been all we've ever had," says Nick. "I do think the only moments in music when political change or whatever came close to happening have all happened in rock. Rolling Stones, Puck, even Bob Dylan . . ."

Manic Street Preachers would clearly love to be the next link in the chain. What happens next depends on whether anybody actually likes *Generation Terrorists*. The Manics desperately want you to like it, and they are obsessed with touring America into submission to make you like it. They could do it, too, if they don't talk themselves hoarse first.

"America is the most important place to us. America is our dream," Nick confesses. "One thing I've always wanted is to get a No. 1 album in America. . . . Pitiful!"

But smart.

—David Quantick

Classix nouveaux : the Manic Street Preachers.

Generation terrorists

for the Nintendo kids,

these Welshmen are

not afraid to rock.

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I'm Pierre. I was born in Jamaica. And lived there until I was ten, with its white beaches, sun, fresh air, pretty women. Because of political trouble there, my parents moved to the States, to Long Island. They chose America thinking it would be a place where their children could get an excellent education. One year I was lucky enough to study in London.

The guys from the rugby club there taught me the game. The British are so civilized. Until you get them on the playing field. Clean hitting but hard hitting. Traveling around the world is the greatest experience. You learn from different cultures. I'll always be ambitious which I learned here in the States. I still play rugby every weekend, which I picked up in England. But, most importantly I'll always be laid back– which I get from being raised in the West Indies. I suppose that's why I like the Converse® Skidgrip.® They're cool, comfortable, kick-back casual shoes. In a sense they remind me of home. Of white sandy beaches. Sunshine. And girls in bikinis. In short, a little bit of paradise.

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Have You Had Your Fun Today?℠

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